FERMENTATIONS *of* ELIZA



MAUDE · M · HANKINS



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SHE LOOKED UP THE DUSTY ROAD THAT SEEMED ENDLESS. AS SHE LOOKED, HER COURAGE BEGAN TO WANE. AFTER ALL . . . . . THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO GET THERE. . . . . — *Frontispiece.*

FERMENTATIONS OF ELIZA

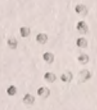
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DRAWINGS BY CORNELIUS HANKINS

She looked up the dusty road that seemed endless. As she looked her courage began to wane. After all, what did clothes matter. The important thing was to get there. . . . . *Frontispiece*

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"It is this: I think I would like to marry you when I get grown." 38

"The idea," cried both girls at once, choking their mother in embraces. "She does not—*She does not.*" 143

"Dear God, please listen and be with us every minute of to-night—especially to-night, dear God." . 200

CHAPTER I

A WISHING BONE AND A DISAPPOINTMENT

THE dinner gong sounded!

From the cool depths of the thickly shaded lawn the guests of Glenraven arose and walked toward the house. As they reached the broad veranda, the front door, just thrown open by Johnson, the colored butler, permitted a cool outrush of air from the tall ceilinged hall within. A very distinguished guest was being entertained at Glenraven, and in her honor a great many delightful ladies and gentlemen had been brought together by its owner, Mrs. Dudley, whose gracious hospitality made her the most toasted and popular lady for miles around.

To-day, the huge fluted columns of this old colonial house glistened in the September sun and the dark green shutters were thrown open in hospitable welcome. Some belated blossoms had appeared on the thick honeysuckle vine, while Dick, the dignified old canary, remembered a song of his youth which he was pouring forth up among their white fragrance.

The distinguishing feature of this Kentucky

home lay in the immense space of ground its galleries, wings and outbuildings covered. When first built in the last century, it was an unpretentious abode, but each successor to the estate seemed to get the builder's craze, until the wonder was its proportions were not marred, but the two grand wings erected by Mr. Dudley seemed to add dignity to the whole. He did not live long, however, to enjoy the home he had prepared for the beloved bride. She was from a distant city, a pretty child of eighteen who had been reared in luxury, yet who thought her new home ideal. Their two years of married life were as one happy day. He died shortly after their second anniversary and she was left with twin girls. Reared entirely by her side, these children became her comrades—shared her joys and anxieties to an unusual degree. Visitors had been known to exclaim, "It is an education to be near and watch them—the perfect little darlings—and to see how they confide in their mother and she in them." Nine years had passed since Richard Dudley's death, and Mrs. Dudley still wore mourning for her young husband.

As soon as Johnson had ushered the last guest into the dining-room, three girls in white frocks and a boy in blue trowsers came from behind the box hedge through which they had been peeping.

"That was she," whispered Eliza, skipping a little ahead of the others, her right hand full of four-leaf clovers, the other buried in the long black fur of the shepherd dog's head. "That one dressed in pink was Mrs. Charlton. I know 'cause she's so pretty." Eliza trilled a roundelay unconsciously.

"The one in front?" asked Susan, who always wanted to be exact. Susan was the larger of the twins, but Eliza was leader.

"Certainly. The one with Mr. Champe. Oh, I know she can write, for she looks like a story-lady—Sip ta ra de ah—"

"Pshaw!" interrupted the irrepressible William. "She ain't nothin'. I don't care nothin' about her. I wish we didn't have to wait. It's awful on hungry kids."

"*You* couldn't be expected to appreciate her, William," said Eliza a little patronizingly. "I am going to be a writer myself, and naturally I want to meet this clerity."

"Celebrity's the word you are hitting at, ain't it?" asked William, laughing, but the girls paid no attention. They had now reached the front porch and were peeping through the half-turned shutters into the parlor. An exclamation of pleased delight escaped them, for everything looked so beautiful. A profusion of roses here, there and everywhere, and they were not expecting to see them, for,

the day before, they had been sent to Aunt Mollie's while the transformation took place. "Mother must have gotten them at the florist's," said Eliza, dancing, for flowers were her delight. "Come on, let's go in and pick out our seats. I bid for the stool so I can move it where Mrs. Charlton sits and watch her while she talks."

"I'd just as soon be in a far corner from her," said William. "I'd *rather* be far away because she might ask me to say something."

"I wish she would ask me something," said Eliza. "Susan, don't you and Stella want to talk to her? I'd *love* to read her what I've written."

"What are your books good for?" asked William teasingly. "All that paper wasted."

Eliza turned to him, saying sweetly:

"You know, William, *you* couldn't be expected to appreciate them though I did bring you in that last chapter. You remember, Susan? I left out his worst traits—I didn't want to commemorate them, William."

"I can't see what fun you find in writing," answered William, reaching over to pull his sister Stella's hair. "It's all I can do to write four lines' worth in my old copybook."

"Everybody can't be expected to be alike," said Susan. "I don't like to do the things that Eliza likes to do and I can't ever understand either why she likes to do them."

"Eliza, did you put your long end of the wishbone over the door?" asked Stella, anxious to change the subject.

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten about that. I put it over the double doors of the dining-room and told Johnson to be sure to watch who went under first. I hope and pray it was Mr. Champe, for I like him better than any man here."

They had now entered the front door and stood facing the dining-room. The double doors were thrown wide open and the long dining table with the many guests seated was plain to be seen. Johnson hovered near the doors, anxious, but happy.

"Who is that ugly little woman sitting on Mother's right?" asked Susan. "That's where she puts her best guest usually."

"It's Mrs. Charlton's secretary," answered Eliza. "I saw them come together."

"Eliza, you see everything," said Susan. "And you never *seem* to see anything."

"It's a pity she is ugly," continued Eliza. "If —I mean *when* I publish my books I'll want pretty people about me. I wish there wasn't a single ugly person in all God's pretty world. It makes you *good* to be pretty."

"Mr. Woodstock isn't pretty and he's good," said Susan.

"Of course," said Eliza, a little patronizingly.

"I never said *ugly* people were *mean,* Susan, but I said it makes you *feel* good if you *look* pretty. Besides, Mr. Woodstock is a preacher, and he ought to be good by rights."

"I'm ugly," declared William, grinning, "but I ain't mean." Giving Stella's hair another pull he danced a jig by throwing his legs straight out. "Mother says that I'm just mischievous," he said, glancing uneasily where Johnson stood at the end of the hall.

"Now, William," said Eliza, sweetly, "you know if you should wake up some morning and find your freckles all gone and your hair turned to a beautiful brown instead of re—I mean auburn, and everything else improved and Aunt Mollie should say, 'How handsome our Willie boy grows,' you know well and good it would make you *feel* so good that you would *be* good all day and maybe the next."

"I wouldn't neither. I don't give a continental how my face looks so's I have a good time. Girls think too much about their looks anyway." William turned a handspring as he spoke, caught his foot on a chair and over he went, the chair under him. Johnson came hurrying forward, indignantly shaking a finger at the children as he came, and forming his lips into the word *"HUSH."*

"Oh, Johnson, tell me quick who went under my bone?" said Eliza, catching him by the coat.

"Whut do yer mean makin' so much noise here fur folks ter wonder at?" demanded Johnson, addressing the abashed William, who had retreated, backing into the parlor. "How kin I spect things ter turn out right whin you chillun keeps up such er noise an' here me er tryin' my bes'." His face was almost tragical and the children began to look sober.

"You never told me, Johnson," said Eliza, during the painful pause that followed; "I can't half wait. Tell me, please, who went under my bone first."

Johnson turned toward her, the frown still on his face. As her meaning began to dawn on him a smile appeared, though none of the children detected it. Eliza earnestly continued to question him.

"You promised to watch, Johnson. Now don't go tell me you forgot. I'll be obliged to marry the one who did it and it's not fair for me not to know. I hope Mr. Champe was the one. I picked him out. *Johnson,* what makes you look so curious?"

"Hit wuz Mr. Cornell," said Johnson, "an' he's got his wife wid him."

Eliza's face grew very red and her mouth trembled. *"Oh!"* she said with a wail that made them all follow her to the sofa where she threw herself sobbing. Her sobs increased and no one

could control her. She felt that her future was ruined. It never occurred to her to doubt that she would have to do what had been foretold some day. In vain Johnson threatened and implored, but to no avail.

"He can't marry yer," he argued; "don't go ter actin' so silly, Eliza. Hain't I er tellin' yer he's got his wife wid him?"

"It don't matter if he has," sobbed Eliza. "She will die some day and then I'll have to do it. It's awful—awful, and he's got a bald head too. I saw it under the shade trees and the sun made it look slick. Oh, oh, I feel worse than I ever did in my life. I think you might have stopped him from it, Johnson—oh—oh!"

Johnson, in despair of quieting her, retreated, closing the parlor door tight—to muffle the sound of her weeping. He walked the length of the hall, stopped and listened. Satisfied that she could not be heard, he went back to his duties in the dining-room, wisely deciding to leave her alone. Some time later when the other children went in for their dinner Eliza was not with them.

"Mother," whispered Susan as she passed her mother in the hall, "Eliza is still crying because Mr. Cornell went under her wish-bone and we can't make her hush."

Eliza, with her head buried in some cushions, be-

came conscious that many people stood around her and some of them were laughing. Then she heard some one say in the sweetest voice: "It's a *shame!* You all go out and leave her to me. Can't you see it's a serious occurrence to her?"

Then, this same person knelt and began talking. The words made no impression until Eliza heard her say she was Mrs. Charlton. Of course she sat up at once and tried to look through her tears. Mrs. Charlton—oh, no, it couldn't be! Why, this was the little ugly woman and *not* the beautiful one. There was surely some mistake somewhere. Yet she knew she had heard aright. Eliza covered her eyes again, for this second disappointment was more than she could bear. Mrs. Charlton continued talking in that same sweet voice.

"Wishing bones and what they foretell don't always come true," she said. "When I was a child I put several bones over doors and the man I married never had been under a single one of them."

Eliza permitted her to take her hand. Her face still was covered with the other hand and she found it easy to imagine Mrs. Charlton pretty because of her voice.

"Nobody really believes in them, dearie. It's just a play. Nobody ever thinks anything serious will come of it."

"Honest?" asked Eliza, faintly.

"I am telling you the *honest truth,*" Mrs. Charlton replied solemnly.

Eliza arose and stood for a minute with puckered brow. She felt decidedly better than she had ever hoped to feel again. Soon her face brightened and she extended both hands.

"I believe you, and am so much obliged to you," she declared. "You've said just the right thing. I think I'd like to kiss you for what you've done."

Mrs. Charlton drew her near and kissed her twice.

"I 'specially wanted to be happy to-night," continued Eliza, "on account of something we had planned to do."

"Tell me," said Mrs. Charlton, encouragingly.

"Well, it's nice because we haven't ever done it before. We are going to sleep in the office by ourselves and not let anybody know about it. We've been slipping things up there all day—things to eat—and to-night we are going to play make-believe games until late, then go to sleep in that old four-posted bed that used to belong to Grandmother. It has a roof over it lined with pleated silk stuff. That's the office up yonder. You see it? That little white building with green shutters under that biggest maple tree."

Mrs. Charlton leaned forward, eagerly looking in the direction indicated by the child's finger. She could only see a tiny speck of white because of

so much green. "Yes," she said encouragingly, thinking of the time she had delighted in doing just such things as this child did. Then, it suddenly dawned upon her that it was a childish prank which she must not openly encourage. "Would your mother approve? Would she think it safe?" she asked.

"Mother understands everything," said Eliza, grandly. "But then, since you mention it, maybe I shall leave a little note on her pillow and ask her not to tell anybody else. We want it to be a surprise. Why, it's the greatest thing we've done ever. That's one reason I am so glad you explained about the bone,"—warmly pressing Mrs. Charlton's hand. "I didn't want anything on my mind to-night. It's ever so much fun to dream things when you are not asleep, and playing games with your eyes shut is fine." She paused suddenly, remembering who Mrs. Charlton was, and flushed.

"You will be a writer if you keep on," said Mrs. Charlton.

"I've already written four," answered Eliza, sweetly. "To be a writer is the height of my ambition," she added, in a quaint way.

"You seem like my own little girl-self come back," said Mrs. Charlton, smiling. "But, listen, dearie, and don't ever forget what I am going to tell you. Don't try to write, dear child. Be happy, joyous,

full of youth! Writing means a weary way—and a stony way. Oh, little girl, it means heart burnings, and yearnings, and disappointments, sacrifices —sometimes a *great* sacrifice. Happiness is the main thing, and gratified ambition does not always produce it."

"Aren't you happy?" asked Eliza, surprised at the lady's earnestness. The flush that sprang to Mrs. Charlton's face made Eliza aware of her rudeness, and she immediately said, "Oh, I'm sorry I asked that—please excuse me."

"It's all right. My words made you ask, dear. If I have missed the real thing, may you find it, *dear* little girl." With tears welling in her eyes, Mrs. Charlton drew Eliza close and kissed her again.

"I'll always remember *you,*" said Eliza, soberly. "And—and the things you've told me."

A short time later, seated happily eating her dinner, Eliza paused in passing a spoonful of ice cream to her mouth to say, "Susan, I've found out who that ugly woman is. She isn't so ugly either, when you're intimate with her."

"Who is she?" asked the three children at once.

"She's Mrs. Charlton, the writer. The pretty one is her secretary—and—and I've concluded writing isn't all it's cracked up to be."

"Well, hurry up, Eliza, so's we can go into the parlor."

"I'm not going in—at least, not now," replied Eliza, calmly. "I'm going out to the woods-lot and make a bonfire." But she refused to tell them what it was she was going to burn.

CHAPTER II

ELIZA SINGS A SONG

"YOU simply can't help feeling lonesome when the others have gone to sleep and left you," whispered Eliza to herself that night, shivering a little in spite of the fact that two warm bodies were in the same bed with her. It was a homely old bed, she thought, when compared with her own blue-enameled one up at the house. True, she could not see the posts now for the darkness, but she could feel where they stood and also where the great closet was with its non-shuttable door. For the first time she wished they had not kept everything so secret. Decidedly it would have been better if some one person had been told. If anything should happen—but, of course, nothing could. Lots of Mother's company had remained for the evening and the house would be alive with lights for hours yet.

She smiled as she thought of the way Susan had slipped the towels and soap here for morning's use. She had hid the towels under her apron and the soap under her sunbonnet, not that anybody would have noticed if both articles had been held out in full

view—with all that company no one had time to notice the children—but it was fun for them to smuggle things and pretend it was necessary to do so. Stella the cousin (Eliza slipped her hand under the cover now to make sure that precious girl was really there) had brought many things from home, laughing at the extraordinary size of the bundle which had escaped her mother's eye. She, Eliza, had brought the eatables—three yellow horse apples, some biscuits, two thick slices of country ham, and one immense cucumber with some vinegar and salt. There was also a slice of cocoanut cake saved over from Sunday's dinner for this express occasion. They had been a week planning it. There had been lots of maneuvering—the hardest part was getting Stella; but she was here, the precious! (Again Eliza's hand unconsciously fondled the body on her right.)

If it had not been for William's dare they would never have thought of passing a night here alone. The idea of his accusing them of being afraid of *haunts*. Nobody except darkies and bad boys like himself believed in such things. Then he had said, "But what about that workman who had been hurt and put up there and had had his leg cut off and afterward—" But, here they had laughed him to scorn and had determined among themselves that they would prove their bravery. *Haunts*—the

very idea! Anyway, the man had been taken away before he died. Shivering, Eliza pulled the sheet over every vestige of her tousled head.

It was a great comfort to know Mother was having a lot of company that evening and to feel that the house was near, if worst came to worst. Then, too, there was the note she had pinned on their own pillow, knowing her mother's habit of looking at them the last thing before she slept. Eliza was glad Mrs. Charlton had made her think of it.

What fun it had been playing Red Riding Hood. Susan had tripped over that old wrapper and the shepherd dog had sprung on her in truly wolf-like fashion. They had not dared to laugh very loud for fear of being heard. Stella had then played "mamma," while she and Susan had committed all sorts of offenses, keeping their make-believe mamma busy trying to handle them. At last they had all grown sleepy at the same time and it was the most fun undressing and climbing into the tall bed with the aid of a chair. Then, they had played some more "mamma" games until the other two got so sleepy they couldn't hold their eyes open, while she, Eliza, grew wider and wider awake.

Sh—! What was that scraping against the chimney?

It must have been the maple branches rubbing against the house. Eliza made up her mind to be-

gin counting the multiplication table backwards—a dull enough proceeding to produce sleep in anybody. Which was the best way to rest? On your left side with one of your arms back so and the other under your head. It must be the bolster that kept her from feeling comfortable. She had never used one before.

It had been a strange day—quite the strangest she had ever spent. She had made a bonfire and burnt all her precious manuscripts. She did not regret it, although she wondered a little at herself for doing it. She couldn't help crying when she saw the name "Robin Moore" just before the paper turned into a red sheet. Robin had been her favorite. She had loved him all the time he was being created, weaving dreams about him continually. At first he was her little brother, then as he grew older she had bestowed on him all the love she would have given the father she had never known; but even had it been possible she would not have taken him from the ashes. Mrs. Charlton's words had made a deep impression. "I will never write another book," she whispered sadly. "And it is *such* a pity. Of course I will go on dreaming tales, for I can't seem to help that, but I won't write a book to be *printed.* I wish I never had seen Mrs. Charlton, for she has killed my Robin Moore and he seems perfecter than ever now he's dead. For two whole

years I have loved him and now I've burnt him up —oh, I didn't think I could *ever* do that."

Of her father, Eliza only knew the things her mother had told her, imagining the rest, and he became her ideal of a great, good man. Every night she lay awake dreaming of him and had real conversations with him of her own making. "You say he was so bright and happy, Mother," she said one day; "then why don't you put on a white dress with blue rosebuds in it and a red rose in your hair. Wouldn't he like that, Mother?" Or another time: "That same sparrow is in the mulberry tree, the one whose little birds were killed by that big wind storm last year, and you would never know she was the same bird that mourned, she's so happy. She thinks a *year* is enough for mourning, Mother." Mrs. Dudley looked at the earnest little face and replied, "She has another nest now, dearie, and has forgotten everything."

"Couldn't *you* forget, Mother?" "Hush, Eliza; I am better for remembering," answered her mother gently. She was a wise little mother in most things and made confiding companions of her two daughters.

There were other times, though, when Eliza played, played, all day long. When she was happy she was wildly, recklessly, so. She sometimes dared *too* much, but rarely got into trouble by it. Often

when too late she discovered her own errors and was very repentant. Now she began to ask herself if it were really safe to spend a whole night up here —just three girls. Supposing Stella had not locked the door when she said she had. Eliza thought she remembered trying it herself, but could not feel quite sure. It would be easier to get up and see than to lie there wondering.

Slowly she began working herself out from between the others. The bed was so tall she was compelled to lie on her stomach and slide down. Something cold on the floor made her draw back quickly. She found an apple seed sticking to the bottom of her foot. She brushed it off and slid to the floor.

The door was really locked after all. She walked to the window and looked out. Lights gleamed from every window of the big house. How silly to feel afraid with everybody up there so close. A grateful breeze sprang through the half-turned shutter slats and blew through her flowing curls. The hot September day had been followed by a cool night; the maple trees bowed and rustled like a much beflounced maiden, casting fitful shadows over the grass now heavy laden with dew. All of this, with the constant chirping of Katy-dids from the tree-tops, soothed Eliza as she knelt there and looked out. Nothing could *possibly* happen to harm any one. What was it she had heard Mr.

Champe call it? His "Joy Day." It was a pretty expression, and she believed she liked Mr. Champe better than any man she had ever known. In her next book she certainly would—but then she remembered there was to be no next book.

Soberly she went back to bed, deciding to compose herself and sleep. Placing one arm around comfortable Susan and the other under her head, she closed her eyes.

To her surprise she found she was not going to sleep. Her eyes would not stay shut, and no matter on which side she turned there was always the convincing feeling that the other one would have been better. After becoming a perfect corkscrew, she decided to go to the window once more and see if the house was still lighted. Just as she began crawling out of bed, the peculiar scratching commenced again. It seemed to be under the very window where she had lately knelt.

"Stella!"

No answer. Stella and Susan were no good. How could she stand it! A distinct thumping now began on the far end of the office. She could feel every hair on her head standing up like a bristle brush. If ever she was to make her escape, *now* was the time. She wouldn't stop to wake the others but would send back for them. Quick as a flash she was out of the bed and, wrenching open the

door, was bounding over the grass as fleetly as a fawn. Not a child anywhere could catch Eliza if she was given a slight start. Feeling the thing still chasing her she rushed right into the parlor full of guests.

"Send for the others, Mother—*now!*" she cried.

"Why, Eliza Dudley!"

Her mother's shocked tones produced self-consciousness. Her night-gown and bare feet before everybody! Her fright became minimized and she felt very foolish. The faces and furniture began to swim as she stammered out something that sounded like a lame excuse:

"I was scared, Mother, up in the old office. We were sleeping there for fun and something began scratching on the weather boarding and"— Her voice refused to emit another sound. She was thoroughly abashed at the outrageous position into which she had jumped. The man known as Mr. Champe found a scarf and threw it around her, drawing her to his lap as he did so. She was soon put at ease by his companionship.

"Come and help me eat my ice cream," he said. "I was just wishing for some one, because it was such a big plateful."

"Another plate of cream, Johnson," called Mother. A heaping pink mass was brought and placed before her on a table. Mr. Champe put her

in an armchair and she sank back, drawing a deep breath. The roses that had held her spellbound that afternoon were everywhere. Heaps of them stood right by her side in the largest jardiniere and the lamp light turned them a warm yellowish pink. Across the room there were more and to her left more. Everybody was smiling at her. She did not know what a perfect little picture princess she made with her sparkling eyes and red cheeks.

"I wish I had on my shoes," she whispered to Mr. Champe. "Mother doesn't let us appear before company bare-footed after we are nine."

Mr. Champe assumed the teasing rôle: "Here now," he said, holding the ice cream just beyond her reach. "What are you going to give me for this? You must *pay,* you know. What can you do, dance, sing, say a speech, or what?"

"I can't do anything except sing," said Eliza, humbly, feeling her insignificance in that company of grown-ups. "I can't sing without the piano anyway."

"Why, that's the girl! Of course you'll sing for us. What do you say?"

"I'll try if Mother will play," said Eliza.

"Then Mother will, I know. Mrs. Dudley," he called, "play for Eliza to sing."

Mrs. Dudley smiled, saying, "Stand up then, Eliza, and let your voice out. There, stand facing them all—that's it."

"You may hold my hand if it will help any," whispered Mr. Champe, but Eliza refused.

The song her mother chose was a simple little love ballad that she had known all her life, but unfortunately it recalled her lost Robin to mind, which made her voice tremble so much she could scarcely control it. When she began the second verse she found it almost impossible to continue. From under the scarf her little hand sought the kind clasp of Mr. Champe's. A new strength seemed to come when he pressed it in his. She threw her head back and started afresh. Her tones rang exquisitely true, and her audience listened spellbound.

"I met you at the wicket gate,
You al–ways let me through.
It's ve—ry har–d to open
But you never come and try.
Won't you tell me why, Robin,
Won't you tell me why?"

There were a few tears in her eyes and possibly a little trembling in her voice, but it only added to the charm.

"Won't you tell me *why,* Robin?
Wo—n't you *tell me why?*"

When she sat down, there was long and continued applause. "It beats the Jews how she has caught the spirit of the thing," said a man over by the door, wiping his glasses.

"Mrs. Dudley, her voice is wonderful," said several at once.

"It did sound rather well," answered her mother.

The only person present who did not praise extravagantly was Mr. Champe. Eliza looked at him expectantly, but he only drew her to the table and told her bluntly to go ahead and eat her ice cream before it melted. "Don't spill it down your neck," he admonished; "it will feel very uncomfortable if you do."

"It didn't go down my neck," laughed Eliza; "it went on my foot and feels like a cold blister."

After everybody began to talk of something else and she had quieted down, he said, "Your singing was very nice, dearie. How comes I never heard you before?"

"You never asked me before," returned Eliza, simply. "I am so much obliged to you for holding my hand. I couldn't have sung that last verse without."

"What a funny child you are," he said, smiling.

When Eliza went to bed she found Stella and Susan already there, but was too sleepy to ask questions. The next morning she heard how her mother had sent for them as soon as she had come to the house. She also learned that it was William who had thumped on the office, trying to frighten them. He never got much satisfaction out of his

joke for everybody blamed and scolded him. Even Mrs. Dudley told him how seriously practical jokes sometimes resulted, and made him promise never to do so again. Eliza discovered also that his mother had punished him for being out so late, and she began to pity him so much that she forgave him.

CHAPTER III

GLENRAVEN "VIEWS AND REVIEWS"

IT had been a long winter. Lovely Glenraven without its garniture of leaves, flowers, and song birds appeared silent and lonely. There were many heavy snows and Johnson had to shovel paths to the front gate and around the house, the drifts often being taller than his head. Then came the sun, the sparkling icicles, the frosted cedars, the rivulets of melted snow and rain running down the wide graveled walk to the front gate where the twisted roots of the big maples—summer playhouses—now looked like silent useless arms.

The old white office had been turned into a schoolroom where Miss Sallie the governess entered lessons with double vim. The cousins, Stella and William, were asked to become pupils, which invitation Aunt Mollie gladly accepted, because of the poor school facilities of the neighborhood.

But, if Glenraven looked lonely from without, inside there was always a wealth of warmth and welcome. Seldom without guests, Mrs. Dudley, imbued with cordial hospitality, made everybody feel so perfectly at home, so free to come and go at will,

that, being thus well fed and housed, oftentimes some had been known to remain almost indefinitely. Mat, the one time nurse, but now cook, whose long service in the family gave her certain privileges, thus expressed her views to Johnson relative to a certain guest who at this time was overstaying:

"Miss Clarise is jes' too good. She is too good fur her own good. I jes' wishes some comp'ny would come an' go an' not come an' stay like dey does."

Johnson nodded to evince his agreement. Then, stooping to pick up a crumb of butter off the floor that Mat had accidentally dropped, he said complaisently: "But thin, Mat, you an' me does all der work fur der comp'ny. Miss Clarise she don't have no bother 'bout dat part."

"Whut?" sniffed Mat, who systematically snubbed Johnson. "Whut'd you sey, nigger?" She went into the pantry, got two eggs for her bread and came back. "Sho we does der hardes' drudgery—sho' we does. Who's gwine let her little han's do dat? But I sees der inside uv things an' Miss Clarise is er angel not ter see. Folks could walk right square dab over her!"

"Miss Clarise ain't *pore,*" declared Johnson, knowing how every need had been abundantly supplied during his stay of six years.

"Pore? Course not! Who mentioned pore-

ness? Dat ain't hit. Hit's waiten on folks dat don't 'preciate hit no more dan der time hit takes ter turn 'roun'. Den ergin, no folk's bank accounts is like Indian rubber, 'specially whin deir men folks is dead."

"Miss Clarise *is* too good. I allers said so," assented Johnson. "Hit's allers been jes' dis erway."

"She's got *me* ter allers stick by her," declared Mat, squaring her shoulders and beating more vigorously on her bread. "I'd go wid her ter Halifax, I would. I'ze true ter Miss Clarise, I is."

"I'll stick as long as you do," declared Johnson with a wink that Mat disdained to notice. Mat had been a widow four years and did not believe in second marriages. The smile with which she accompanied her next remark was caused by memories in which he had no part. It was very good to see Mat smile. Her face looked like a sunbeam breaking through a cloud.

"I tell yer, nigger, I'll never furgit der day I fust come. Hit wuz right after Marse Richard died an' dem two pretty little dears wuz 'bout er month old. Miss Clarise she put 'em in dese arms uv mine an' thin she looked at me an' she sez, wid her two pretty big eyes, she sez, 'You'll take care uv 'em, won't you, Mat?' I'll never furgit her 'spression, not ef I lives ter be er hundud. I knowed I'd foun' my mistis an' I ain't never changed my min' frum dat

day ter dis. I 'preciate her, I does. Look how good an' kind she allers is. Look how good she wuz ter take Marse Richard's sister's chillun an' put 'em in school wid hern 'thout no charges—not thet I'm er saying thet Miss Mollie don't 'preciate hit."

"I never seen er wusser boy dan dat ar William," said Johnson, remembering past offenses.

"He worries *me* some," agreed Mat. "Him allers er comin' roun' er nosin' ter see whut I'ze gwine have fur dinner. I can't hide nothin' 'tall frum him. But thin, boys is all jes' der same. I'll take girls fur mine ever'time."

"Boys *is* mean frum der day dey's born," declared Johnson, forgetting his own sex.

"Dey sho' is," said Mat, breaking into one of her contagious laughs that echoed throughout the big kitchen and the entry beyond.

. . . . . .

In the late fall, Mrs. Dudley had lost an only sister, which threw her back into deep mourning, and her sweet face still bore traces of her sad bereavement. Soon after it happened, Mr. Champe had called. Eliza, going into the darkened parlor, had found him waiting for her mother to appear. She slipped her hand into his, before he had exactly comprehended who she was. It was the first time they had seen each other since the house party tendered Mrs. Charlton.

"Why, hallo!" he exclaimed; "whom have we here? If it isn't the little dream-girl who got frightened at bugaboos."

"I'm awful glad to see you," she told him. "Why on earth hav'n't you been before?"

He threw back his head and laughed.

"Not being blessed with double vision, my dear, how was I to know I was wanted?"

"You remember you called it your joy day?" she continued earnestly. "It was such a pretty way to call it. But what I've wanted 'specially to tell you was what I've known ever since that night. I am going to tell you now."

"Strike ahead," said Mr. Champe, pulling her down on the sofa by his side and turning his head in a listening attitude.

"It is this: I think I would like to marry you when I get grown," said Eliza, smiling sweetly.

"You would?" he said, flushing with pleasure at the honest admiration for himself shown in her upturned face.

"Well," he continued after a pause, during which Eliza had her misgivings. "That's a serious proposition, my dear. You see, I don't know how you are going to turn out, and here I am, already finished. Don't you think you have me at a disadvantage?"

"I am going to *try*," said poor Eliza.



"IT IS THIS: I THINK I WOULD LIKE TO MARRY YOU WHEN I GET GROWN," SAID ELIZA, SMILING SWEETLY.

"That's the question," returned Mr. Champe. "I should want you to be very smart, and you know that takes application. You hav'n't told me yet whether you are doing well in school?"

"Not so overly," answered Eliza, faintly.

"Then you must begin to make more effort. I couldn't possibly have a lazy wife."

Eliza thought he was in dead earnest. "I hear Susan calling me," she said, rising. "Good-by, Mr. Champe. We are going to run a race down to the old bridge."

"I hope you will win," called Mr. Champe.

"I almost always do," she paused at the door to assure him. "Susan gives up too quick. It doesn't ever pay to give up." She flung him a kiss and disappeared.

When their mother entered a few minutes later, he turned from the window where he had stood watching the race.

"Do you know," he said to her, holding out his hand, "I was just thinking as you came in what glorious children yours are. Why they are worth —are worth a *million dollars* apiece."

. . . . . .

Eliza had really meant to reform, but studying was not her strong point. She was very apt to linger over the lessons she loved and give the others a mere sweeping glance. Like many bright chil-

dren, she trusted to that very brightness to bridge her over difficulties and her marks were usually good. Mrs. Dudley trusted her, for she knew Eliza was conscientious. Susan the twin, who was a matter-of-fact little soul, often remonstrated: "Come, Eliza—you know the 'rithmetic is awful hard for to-morrow."

"You and Stella for arithmetic," Eliza would answer carelessly, "I for history and map drawing. I adore to draw maps, Susan." And then—but Miss Sallie was very forgiving and very helpful, so, on the whole, things went smoothly.

Stella the cousin was a wholesome, sweet girl with quiet brown eyes and drab-colored hair, perfectly straight, combed back from her forehead because of a cowlick, about which she was rather sensitive She often provoked her mother by wishing aloud that she was "Aunt Clarise's child." She meant nothing disloyal by the wish, which merely existed because of her devotion to both her cousins and her desire never to be separated from them a moment.

William was a mischievous, well-grown boy, mostly legs, whose twelve years had not been devoted to study. But, while his backwardness in books made the girls rather look down on him, they were forced to respect his ability for always getting even with them in the matter of jokes, and *more than even.* He didn't care a rap for their opinions,

however. When his mother had first proposed his studying under Miss Sallie with the girls, he had flatly put his foot down on it; but finally, after weighing matters, he decided that Miss Sallie would be a very easy person to be got around. If his expectations were not realized about Miss Sallie, no one was any the wiser, for William always made the best of a bad bargain.

At this special time, reviews and examinations were on, and the breath of spring in the air made Miss Sallie and lessons rather trying. One day they all felt dreadfully bored. William fidgeted, Eliza yawned, and Stella and Susan cast sorrowful glances in their direction, secretly not blaming them so very much. Perhaps it was the warm spring day that made Miss Sallie seem different; anyhow, when she gave three raps on her desk to attract Eliza's attention and then the answer fell wide of the mark, she arose in a very un-Miss-Sallie-like manner and demanded that Eliza arise also.

"Where was your mind when I asked that question, Eliza? You are not a bit interested to-day—*Where was your mind?*"

"I was just imagining," said Eliza, sweetly, rising and accompanying her rising with a smile.

"Stand here," commanded the new Miss Sallie, "and tell the whole class what it was you were imagining."

If the whole class had been a room full, instead of three, Eliza would still have secretly gloried in her task. She walked toward the rostrum swinging her arms and feeling entirely self-poised. William's expression as she passed his desk evinced plainly that he thought it great fun making her do this thing, and she exulted within herself more because she knew how much pleasure she was deriving from it.

"Here?" she asked of Miss Sallie, measuring two steps back from the rostrum's edge.

"Yes. Begin."

"It won't be what you expect," said Eliza. "I'm awful glad William is interested in something," she added, seeing William grin openly.

"Begin," commanded Miss Sallie, feeling suddenly that she must commence observing stricter discipline.

"Well, I was in a lion's den."

"Gee whiz!" ejaculated William.

"It was a good lion," continued Eliza sweetly. "And I was the lion's little girl. He could talk to me, which he did all the time, and our home was green and whispering winds and sweetie smells of violets and earth and things—everywhere was woods and I never saw the inside of a house for —for a whole year."

The faces of the three listening children became

wistful. Miss Sallie looked at them compassionately as Eliza took her seat; then, that part of Miss Sallie which had endeared her to children all her life came uppermost. Closing her book she arose.

"It seems to me," she said, smiling, "that I noticed some violets blooming somewhere the other day. Suppose we lay books aside and see if we can find them."

With a shout of joy, the schoolroom was vacated in a twinkling.

The woods-lot—one had to cross the big road to reach it—stretched along opposite the house until it ended near the pebbly banks of a creek. The sprinkling of tender green overhead and peeping sprouts underfoot made it very lovely just now. The sun, the smell of spring, the awakening song of birds caused the children to dance in their appreciation. Once, a red bird swooped down in front of them, then sprang on a hack-berry limb and commenced trilling happy notes. A blue jay further off dropped to the ground, secured a stick, and was gone in a twinkling.

"Nests!" exclaimed Stella.

"Building," said Susan.

"Spring is come; I know it, I know it," sang Eliza, catching the hands of the others in sympathy.

"I just wish something would happen," she cried. "I wish we could discover something alive that we never saw before—just anything wild."

"You'd run, Eliza," said William. Eliza looked at him condescendingly.

"That shows all you know, William," she replied sweetly, "for I'd do no such thing."

Across the road William spied a friend and a sudden idea occurred which he hastened to put into execution.

"You-all run on," he said to the others. "I see Rufus Dodd over yonder and I've a word to say to him."

"Well, hurry," said Miss Sallie. "You know these are still school hours. We will wait for you here."

While he was gone the girls found many things to do, such as swinging on grape vines and small saplings bent down for the purpose. The soft breath of spring fanned their faces. Miss Sallie, too, caught the spirit and entered into everything with real enjoyment.

In the meantime, William had caught up with his friend, who carried the skin of a fox in one hand and a gun in the other. For some time they stood talking in low tones. Finally William said, "Now, you run on ahead and slip it behind that old log at the foot of the largest mound—then hide and wait. I bet we give Eliza the scare of her life."

"You were not gone very long," said Miss Sallie as he sauntered up. She was busy trying to dis-

entangle her foot from a sapling and failed to note his rather sheepish expression.

"Let me undo you, Miss Sallie," he said, gallantly holding the tree down until she could spring off gracefully.

"Come on, let's hurry. The violets are down by the creek where the steepest part juts out," cried Eliza, skipping ahead of the others.

It was the nicest creek in the world. It sprang from the most beautiful spring and ran all the time. Never was it too deep to wade and always the water was clear enough to see one's feet every minute. There were many colored pebbles and snail shells —My! Sometimes even a slippery snail was found crawling out.

"O little creek, of a big creek, of a river, of a ocean—where do you end and where begin?" sang Eliza. "You are mine though and you will never leave me, will you, O creek?"

Two grape vines grew on the bank and looped on purpose for swings. It was very exciting going over the water, then back again, bumping against the mossy wall of a bank. The violets were there, too, hid by moss and leaves—little wild ones owning no perfume but unequaled for freshness and beauty.

Across the creek was a big mound covered with living curiosities: ferns, hazlenut bushes, papaw-

trees and sweet gum trees also—and the most beautiful moss, some with little short ferns growing out of it. This was the children's happy hunting ground. They never ventured so far alone, but there were frequent days spent with Miss Sallie and Mat, or sometimes even Johnson, could be coaxed into becoming a child again. Mother was the only one who would never go. Perhaps it was because of memories clinging to the beautiful spot. She plainly had been once, for whenever the children returned eager to tell everything, she always listened and would sometimes question as to details, showing plainly her familiarity with the place.

Half-way up the mound there were some logs high and dry which made capital seats. It was to these that William innocently tolled the party.

Eliza, seated, rested her chin in both hands and said thoughtfully, "I think the world is the sweetest place. I love everybody in it to-day, Miss Sallie. I couldn't get mad even with an enemy."

"That's religion, dear," answered Miss Sallie. "I often think the best sermons are preached to us by nature on days like this if we will stop to listen."

"What kind of sermons?" asked William, suspiciously.

"A sermon about all this," said Miss Sallie, waving her hand significantly. "Dear child, William, in church is not the only place we hear preach-

ing; only you must be awake to listen and must look to see. Eyes to see and ears to hear. Every little flower, every snail shell—every rippling wave contains a sermon, dear."

"I never knew what shouting meant before," said Eliza, "but I believe I do now." The solemnity of her voice struck Stella and Susan speechless. William alone was undaunted.

"I never could bear sermons," he said. "I'd never go to church if Mother didn't make me."

Eliza looked his way with thoughtful eyes.

"There's lots of truth in what he says, Miss Sallie," she declared. "You know," she continued apologetically, "we don't go so very often because it is so far—and we have Bible reading at home every morning and on Sunday a long one with a lot of explaining. Mother never misses that. I try to love to go to church, but I don't really. Mr. Woodstock reads all his sermons and not a bit of expression to his voice. I think it's a crime to be a poor minister. Jesus Himself was right particular about choosing the ones to preach—it's a particular job because so much depends on it."

"I despise to go to listen to Mr. Woodstock," declared William, but Eliza continued as though he had not spoken.

"I'll never forget what Mother read to us once about a man named Legion because he had so many

devils in him and when Jesus had cast them out the man wanted to go follow along after Jesus, but Jesus told him no, to go on home and testify there. He knew who were best fitted to preach His Word—at least that is what I understood about it—isn't that what you thought, Miss Sallie?"

"I don't know," answered Miss Sallie, finding it hard to answer Eliza on the spur of the moment. "I suppose though that a great many do attempt to be ministers who are not really called."

"That's just it exactly," declared Eliza. "It's a crime, I say, Miss Sallie—why it's worse than being a poor surgeon. You remember that poor man they killed by cutting off his leg up yonder at the office? Well, legs are no account compared to people's souls—the importance of them, I mean —are they, Miss Sallie?"

"Eliza, stop being so sanctimonious," whispered William with a wicked smile, edging closer and touching her skirt. "Look, see what's on you."

From the depths of Eliza's earnestness she awoke and looked in the direction William's eyes indicated. Horrors! An animal was creeping there—a huge rat or a fox.

"Murder!" she screamed, jumping up and upsetting the others, who fell backwards over the log.

"Murder!" she screamed again, running pell-mell down the mound, the others following.

William and another boy, who had come out from behind a tree, laughed to split their sides.

"Look!" cried William, waving a fox skin at their receding backs. "Just see what you-all were scared of—only a skin."

"I thought you said you wanted to discover something, Eliza," he shouted. "I said you'd be scared, and oh, goodness! weren't you, though!"

They came to a halt and turned. At first Eliza could not comprehend that it was a joke, but, when she did, her face became crimson.

"You mean boy! You *meanest* boy—you mean boy!" she cried, stamping her foot. Just then her foot slipped and she almost went backwards into the creek. With an effort she caught herself just in time, but this sobered her and kept her from saying anything more to William. It was a very silent group that hurried home. William felt that he had not been treated fairly because a joke is a joke. Susan and Stella had only sympathy for Eliza, while Miss Sallie felt sorry for everybody and wanted to be peacemaker, but words seemed trespassers.

It was not until the lamps were lighted that she managed to speak a few words with Eliza alone. Eliza was still nursing her injuries, but she consented to listen, which was something.

"You forget what you said about loving every-

body and that nothing could make you angry, even with an enemy. You did not stand the test, dear," said Miss Sallie.

"I know it. I'm glad of it! That mean boy William—who would have thought of his doing anything so mean!"

"He only meant to tease," said Miss Sallie, pulling Eliza closer to her. "I will speak to him though, for practical jokes result seriously sometimes."

"I wish you would," said Eliza. "I wish you'd —do—I don't know what," she ended lamely.

"You won't feel this way to-morrow," said Miss Sallie. "I hate it on your account, Eliza, for I was very much impressed with what you said and your getting so angry sort of—er, ruined it all."

"I know it!" cried the child. "Don't rub it in any worse, Miss Sallie. I never could see why it is that we never do what we think we will when the time comes. I was feeling religious-er than I ever had felt in my life and to think William had power to ruin every bit of it in a minute. I'm exactly like Peter, Miss Sallie. When Mother read to us about Peter I seemed to love him the best of all the apostles 'cause—'cause he was like me ex-act-ly. He failed so many times in acting just as he expected to act—and yet—he meant so well and—he loved so much."

"No one is perfect," said Miss Sallie. She knew Mrs. Dudley spent much time reading to the girls, yet had not before realized how deep the impression made. "I know you and Susan must be a great comfort to your mother," she continued, noticing Eliza's silence.

"Yes, I think we are—and she's a comfort to us. You see, we're all each other have had for ten—nearly eleven years. Mother is not like any other mother. She tells us things. I know all about how Mr. Hobbs is managing the farm—it isn't so well either. And about those notes Mother is having trouble with—the cotton land renters, you know. This seems to be a bad year for Mother."

"She's too good—that's why," said Miss Sallie.

"I don't know," answered Eliza, smiling sweetly. "Nobody can be too good these days—can they?"

"No—I suppose not, you dear child," answered Miss Sallie, rising. "Oh, by the way, Eliza, treat William kindly to-morrow. Heap coals on his head, dear. It is the best way."

"I had already decided to do it," Eliza answered sweetly, her good humor fully restored. "I like to do hard things."

When William, with a rather shamed-faced expression, entered the schoolroom next morning, he was surprised to find the girls meeting him with the kindest glances. Once, during the forenoon

when he broke his pencil point, Eliza proffered him hers as though it was the most natural thing in the world to do. Stella and Susan also showed him unusual kindnesses, and by evening he was not only sorely puzzled but really uncomfortable. Finally, he could stand it no longer and decided to take the bull by its horns.

"Say, Eliza," he whispered, "what's it you-all are trying to give me? Heaping coals—is that the idea?"

"What are you talking about, William?" she asked sweetly.

"Shut up," he answered impatiently. "I'm up to your-all's racket. You can't pull any wool over my eyes. Let's play quits. I call it sneaky to act as you-all are doing." He seemed so miserable for William that Eliza pitied him a little.

"All right, William," she said, extending her hand. "It is all patched up and the seams are not even rough. Let's play 'Base' when school is out." There was something very winning about Eliza.

"You are game all right," declared William with honest admiration in his face. "Eliza, I'll bring you a big bunch of jonquils—the first that bloom —you see if I don't!"

CHAPTER IV

WILLIAM'S PREDICAMENT AND ELIZA'S DISCOVERY

IN April. Eliza wrote a letter:

"*Dear Mr. Champe:*

"This is Eliza. How are you? There isn't any news on the farm. Why on earth don't you come? Miss Sallie says I'm applying better than I did. Applying gets harder as summer gets nearer and everything calls us out doors. Be sure to answer my letter. I like pen and ink answers better than heart answers like you said you answered last time. I heard Johnson telling Mat that our cropper didn't understand the farm. Susan has lost a side tooth. Mine's not shedding yet, although we're twins. 'I need you every hour.' That is a hymn so I put kotation marks. Susan sends love. Mother would but she's abcent. Good-by,

"Yours in the near futur,

"ELIZA DUDLY, age eleven and one day."

Without delay, Mr. Champe answered in this wise:

"*Dear Eliza:*

"Your letter makes me quite hopeful. I believe my little Eliza will make a woman of whom anybody would be proud. I shall be coming out some fine day soon. Every farm needs a man at its head (tell Mother). Study hard, little girl; say your prayers, and make a noble woman. I need *you,* also; so don't forget to keep me posted. Many heart answers go with this that pen and ink can't write.

"Always your good friend,

H. C. CHAMPE.

"P. S. Your birthday present follows this by express. There's one for Susan too. H. C."

But summer had come before Eliza thought about answering that letter. Then, an accidental discovery made her write.

"Come on, kids," shouted William one day, "come on—Aunt Lucy is picking geese." He ran on ahead up to the big barn, not paying the least attention whether they followed or not.

They found Aunt Lucy seated on the usual old cane-bottomed chair, the picking already begun. An old gray goose was in her lap and on her right stood a barrel ready for the feathers. William hovered near, his hands rammed deep in his pockets.

"Don't you want me to catch one for you?" he

asked; but Aunt Lucy, who had no use for boys —especially for William, who teased her unmercifully—said sharply, "No, I don't! Min' yer own buz'ness, boy! En don't go tryin' enny mo' monkey shines roun' here er I'll perlitely sen' yer ter der house—I sho' will."

"What has he been doing, Aunt Lucy?" asked Stella, who had just entered.

"Whut ain't he done, yer'd better ast," sniffed Aunt Lucy, "an' he ain't been here ceptin' jes' one little minute so fur."

William grinned and began to move toward the corner where the geese stood huddled together like frightened sheep. Stella, watching him, suspected he was up to something, so she said, "You'd better mind Aunt Lucy, William, or I'll tell Mother on you when we go home."

Aunt Lucy suddenly broke out into one of her working songs; her voice pitched high.

"Go tell Aunt Susan, 7
Go tell Aunt Susan,
Go—tell Aunt Su—san
Der ol' gray goose is dead."

"Honey" (to Eliza), "move a little so's I kin put der feathers in 'thout stoopin'."

"Der one she's been savin', 7
Der one she's been sav–in',

Der one she's been sav—in'
Ter make er feather bed."

"Der ol' gander's mournin',
Mourn—in', mourn—in',
Der ol' gander's mournin'
Becase his mate is dead."

During the singing William had gradually moved closer to the huddled geese and as Aunt Lucy sang the last word he screamed, *"Dead nothing!"* and grabbed for the nearest one. Immediately, like a flock of wild geese they spread their wings and flew straight across the barn. William was so frightened that he fell sprawling, while everybody laughed. Aunt Lucy herself laughed so much she overturned her chair and went head over heels. This made her furious.

"Didn't I *tell* yer so!" she said to William as soon as she arose. "Didn't I tell yer how 'twould be, yer meddlesome boy." She shook her fore finger at him menacingly. "I'm *glad* yer *fell!* Now I jes' recken yer'll *min'* me whin I keep er tellin' yer ter behave. Here er scarin' all dem geese up an' me er tellin' yer all der time ter quit."

"I put some life into the things anyway," said William, rubbing the dirt off his knee trousers. (The barn had a dirt floor.)

Soon Aunt Lucy had another goose in her lap and the picking was continued.

"Doesn't it hurt them to pick them?" asked Susan. "It seems like it would."

"Lans no, chile," said Aunt Lucy. "Wouldn't dey be er hollowin' ef hit did? Yer all stop axin' questions. I can't half work an' talk no how." Then she began another song:

"Come ye fount uv ev—ry bless—in' 5
Tune my harp ter—sin–g yo praise.
Dreams uv mer—cy never ceas—in'.

("I can balance myself on this barrel," whispered William to Eliza.)

"Foun—tun lies o—pen, 5
Foun–tun lies o—pen,
Sinner come ba—th yo—weary head."

"See," whispered William, lifting himself by steadying his arms on the edge of the barrel and hoisting his legs over his head. The barrel, with so much weight on its edge, tilted, and William disappeared in its depths of feathers where he kicked and screamed until Aunt Lucy pulled him out by the feet.

"I'm smothering to death," he screamed, dancing back and forth, his mouth and head covered with feathers. "Somebody help me get rid of the things!" In his excitement he hugged Aunt Lucy, but she pushed him from her with no gentle hand.

"Git erway, yer good-fur-nothin'! Didn't I tell

yer how 'twould be? Yer've ruined my feathers *furever!* I'll never in der worl' pick 'em all up—*never.* Git *out* uv here, an' don't yer *never* come back no mo'."

"They are getting all down my windpipe," said William uneasily. "I'll help you, Aunt Lucy, as soon as I can breathe." Aunt Lucy cast upon him a look of scorn.

"Yer help yerself *out* jes' as soon as yer legs gits able ter walk," she said decidedly. "No sooner had I seen yer head pokin' in at dat door terday den I sed ter myself, 'Der's er gwine ter be trouble,' an' sho' 'nough look."

"You might know I never fell in on *purpose,*" said William, feeling like a much injured person.

"Oh, look, do *look!*" screamed Eliza.

Everybody glanced in the direction she pointed and what they saw was enough to frighten them. A poor goose lay there, one of its sides terribly mangled and bleeding.

"Whut done it?" asked Aunt Lucy bewildered.

"A dog—a big yellow stray one. I saw it all through that big crack," said Eliza, covering her face.

"Pore goose," said Aunt Lucy, picking it up and carrying it to her chair. She was a very old woman and not at all quick witted.

"Shall I run to the house for Mother?" asked Eliza.

"Yes, chile," said Aunt Lucy. "Yes, my lam', jes' yer go ter der house an' tell yer mammy der dogs done killed er goose—fur hit is dead—hain't hit?"

Eliza didn't tarry for a second bidding. On her way to the house she saw something else that shocked her. The gate was down in the orchard and the stock running in there loose, ruining all the new fruit trees. She quickened her pace and ran into the house. After a long search she found her mother going through boxes in the lumber room. Mrs. Dudley looked up, wondering as Eliza burst in.

"Oh, Mother, do come quick! The dogs have killed a goose and the cows are ruining everything in the new orchard."

"See," she cried as they reached the side porch from which a good view of the orchard could be obtained. "Just see, Mother! Oh, what shall we do?"

"I told Mr. Hobbs about that gate last week," said Mrs. Dudley. "He is always so forgetful."

"I don't think he understands managing the farm, do you, Mother?"

"No—no, I suppose not," answered her mother absent mindedly.

"Couldn't Mr. Champe do better?" asked the persistent Eliza.

"What on earth do you mean?" said Mrs. Dudley, startled.

Eliza felt herself treading on doubtful ground.

"I imagine he has such fine judgment, Mother," she spoke unfalteringly, "and I'm sure he could fix things if he would come. Don't you think he's fine, Mother?"

The mother looked down and met the upturned eyes without answering.

"You love him too," said Eliza convincedly.

"Eliza, don't speak so! It—it isn't attractive," said Mrs. Dudley, and Eliza hastened on subdued. In her mother's tones more than in her words had been a decided reproof.

As they entered the barn door Aunt Lucy lifted her black wrinkled face mournfully. She had lived with the Dudley family all her life, but like all others on the place her whole heart belonged to the present "mistis." She held out the mangled goose meaningly, and Mrs. Dudley crossed over and laid a consoling hand on Aunt Lucy's shoulder.

"Never mind, Aunt Lucy," she said. "Don't you worry a bit. See that the dog is killed, for he must be vicious. You counted the geese, didn't you, Aunt Lucy?"

"Yes, ma'am, Miss Clarise. I counted 'em all but two an' I couldn't ketch dose ter count 'em."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Dudley, checking the

children's threatened laughter with upraised hand.

"It might have made her feel badly to laugh at her ignorance," she explained to them on their way back to the house. "It is never kind to hurt a person's feelings."

"The very idea of her having to catch two things to count them," laughed William.

"She's getting old and her mind is weak," said Mrs. Dudley.

"But, then, look what a good goose picker she is," put in Susan.

"And her muscle is something not to be laughed at," declared William, remembering the shaking she had given him.

"She can remember lots of songs," said Stella.

Eliza alone of the group remained silent. Her thoughts were busy though. In fact, her brain was working exactly like Mat's yeast when she set it to rise. Her face felt very hot—it was because of the overwhelming responsibility of having to decide on a wonderful undertaking—and decide alone. Joan of Arc herself couldn't have felt much more depending on her, nor could she have been more steadfast in her determination to accomplish her mission. Eliza's absolute faith in Mr. Champe and her love for him made her more and more certain of the necessity of her plans; "for, I understand him perfectly," she said over and over to her-

self. "*I understand him perfectly.* He ought to know Mother loves him. He will be as glad as can be. *I* must be the one to go tell him. I understand him perfectly."

CHAPTER V

ELIZA STARTS ON A JOURNEY

WHEN Eliza had said she understood Mr. Champe, it was because, with a child's love, she had entirely given her heart to him, and he had responded with a warmth of affection equalling her own.

Mr. Howell Champe was now in his forty-fifth year. On the death of his beloved wife some twenty years previous, very desolate and lonely, he had taken up his abode in a leading hotel, where, in its spacious dining-room he occupied a table near the entrance and people were wont to remark that his table was usually filled with his own guests.

Possessing wealth, influence, and friends who numbered among the hundreds, yet in some respects he was a very lonely man. The things he craved—wife and family—he had not. Those who had known his wife, and known them together, said the absolute devotion to her memory made the thought of a second marriage seem a sort of sacrilege. That he would have made a golden paradise on earth for any woman goes without saying. Such wealth of tenderness of which he was capable

was evinced by the affection bestowed on the children of the different households where he was intimate, and the loyalty of his little friends was a source of the greatest enjoyment to him. Sometimes he would even rock them to sleep and carry them off to bed, followed by a smiling nurse.

He was kind and courteous to everybody. He loved the ladies with that friendly intimacy that at once made him exceedingly popular. Fearlessly, unstintedly, his opinion was given without apology, and everybody listened. Wherever he went, he ruled. From the millionaire who took him about in his private car, to the poor old candy seller who invaded his office weekly, he was beloved. Selfishness he abhorred above all things and had never been known to put personal enrichment above community service.

A week after the events of our last chapter, as Mr. Champe sat in his office after lunch feeling a little sleepy, the postman entered. Mr. Champe was wide awake at once. Mails interested him above everything, and he smiled as he assorted this unusually large one. The golden sun touched the light brown pompadour of his hair, combed straight away from a wide white forehead. "Any one would think me an editor," he said, smiling, "for I've got so many this time." Selecting one letter from the others he immediately cut through the top

of its envelope. "I wonder now what Eliza can have to say," he mused, drawing out the folded sheet. Before reading it, however, he took a small silver match safe from his pocket and with a deft stroke ignited the waxen match and lit his cigar. He gave two or three deep draws, then, holding the cigar between his third and fore fingers, he read the letter twice without pausing. The cigar remained in his hand and went out unnoticed. His brow was drawn into a decided wrinkle. "What in the world can the child mean to tell me—and what can I do about it," he said. Then, he read the letter over again, noting carefully each word:

"Dear Mr. Champe:

"I have been such a long time in answering your letter that I wonder if it is too late. Mr. Champe, I am coming to see you to-morrow. I am going to walk through. I always did want to go slow through the country and see things, but this is the first time I have got a good reason for doing it. Please you meet me at the bottom of the big hill at the edge of town so you can carry my grip. I won't get lost because I know the way good. I've got something very important to tell you, Mr. Champe. It is something I found out axerdentally. Mother and Susan both know I am going, but they don't know what day exactly. No news on the farm. Good-by, ELIZA.

"P S You will be awful glad to hear it. Eliza.
"P S I will start about sun up. E."

The letter was dated the day before; so this was the day Eliza meant to come.

Just as Mr. Champe finished the third reading, a visitor entered the open door. Mr. Champe looked up, smiled, and leaned over to remove some papers from the chair opposite and make it ready for his guest.

"Ah, Welche, sit down—have this chair." A welcoming smile illumined Mr. Champe's face. "Where have you been keeping yourself? Have a cigar with me—a new brand—called Romeo and Juliet—Cuban make and very fine."

The visitor did not take the proffered chair at once, but glanced at Mr. Champe's mail and ran his small hand through his very black, slicked-combed hair, then down, touching his pointed beard and letting it eventually glide to his side again, his keen gray eyes taking in every detail of the situation at a glance.

"I just ran up as soon as the bank closed to talk to you about a little matter—you lawyers can always straighten things in a jiffy where we bankers are slow as snails." His voice gave the impression of being almost too deep and masculine for such a small man. "But, perhaps I'd best wait as you seem so occupied—"

"No, no; I can see you now—at once," said Mr. Champe. "Sit down. Here, let me strike a match for you. I suppose the children are both well, and that you miss your neighbors, the Campbells."

"The children miss them—yes; but they seek comrades further away and I see less of them than ever. You know, though, I never found children—not even my own—interesting. They always seem selfish little souls to me—only loving you for what they get out of you. By the way, speaking of the Campbells, he is anxious to put some one in his house for the winter all furnished as it is. I wish we could find some one for him. He needs the rent, for his affairs are in a bad way, and besides, I hate to have that house standing vacant there—right next to me. It seems ridiculously superstitious I know, but the windows have reminded me of dark unwinking eyes ever since they left. Hang it all—anybody would call it a bad conscience."

"It would be difficult to hit on the right person to take the house—using all their things just as they left them. A great responsibility, I am afraid. Mrs. Campbell spoke of it to me, but I don't think it will be possible."

"Campbell's affairs are in a bad way," repeated Mr. Welche. "Purely confidential, you know,

Champe, but, as his banker, I see the inside as no one else does. Now, this Florida trip, and doctor's bills no doubt."

"I am very sorry to hear it—too bad. Campbell's a good sort."

"Yes—but unfortunate," said the banker, flicking the ashes from his cigar as if to say that ended him as far as he was concerned. "Well—now about this other business, Champe. I brought certain papers with me—left the others in the vault where you can get them at any time."

One hour—two—passed as they bent over the documents together. Mr. Champe, glancing at his watch, hastily arose.

"I'll tell you what, Welche, it is in a considerable tangle, but I think I can straighten it—I must see those other papers. Have an engagement to meet and must go now—it's very important."

"I'll see you at the directors' meeting to-night?" said Mr. Welche, rising.

"I don't think so. Am sure I couldn't possibly be there by eight. If I find I can come later I may drop in toward the last of the meeting."

If a surprised look came into Mr. Welche's eyes, he hastily suppressed it as he said, "You know that 'Ring' matter comes up to-night and will be voted on."

"That's so—I had forgotten that," said Mr.

Champe, rising. "It won't be possible for me to go, though."

Mr. Welche's eyes rested a minute on the letter —Eliza's—lying half-open on the desk, but whether he thought of it or connected it in any way with Mr. Champe's failure to attend the important meeting, no one could have told. Mr. Champe himself was again looking at it and felt impatient for the banker to be gone. But Mr. Welche never did anything quickly. It had been told that when his wife died and he had been hastily summoned from his bedroom to her own for a last farewell that he had been exceeding slow and she had breathed her last before he reached her. Be that as it may, now he opened his watch, glanced at its gold face, closed it, and placed it carefully back in his pocket before holding out his hand to Mr. Champe.

"Good-by then—I'll vote for you by proxy if I am permitted. You want to vote *for* it, of course."

"Yes—yes," said Mr. Champe absent-mindedly.

As soon as the door closed he went back to Eliza's letter, puzzled and frowning afresh. Soon he rose, putting all the other mail into his pocket unopened. "I must go first to the courthouse, then right on out to Glenraven as fast as I can," he said. "I must see into this. There's no telling what that child is up to. I wonder what determined her to take such a plunge."

Exactly what had determined Eliza on taking such a plunge she couldn't have told herself. It came from gradually thinking of it in an indistinct way, at first putting it from her as a dream not possible to execute, but gradually wanting to do it so much that she could resist no longer. It grew to seem the exactly right and kindest thing to do; the thing that would put the farm on a footing and make her mother happy. She had perfect confidence in Mr. Champe's power to do this. The night she wrote the letter and addressed the envelope she felt the utmost satisfaction with herself. It didn't once occur to her that what she meant to do was not at all in accordance with propriety. Susan was made acquainted with her plans, but only in a vague way and was cautioned not to speak of them. As Susan had been used all her life to Eliza's make-believes, she never thought seriously of this one. Eliza was too honorable not to tell her mother about it also, but no impression was made at the time, although afterward what she had said was recalled. "Mother, I am going to see Mr. Champe some time—do you care?"

"That depends," answered her mother.

"Then I'm going," said Eliza, and there it rested. After writing her letter, she took all the pennies out of her savings bank, then got her best clothes together and fastened them in her leather satchel.

Early morning found her started on her journey. She dropped the letter in the family mail box just outside the gate, where it would be taken up and mailed by Johnson at seven o'clock. One of the neighbors used the box, so it usually contained several letters and he would not be apt to notice hers. After hearing her letter drop to the bottom, she turned and looked toward the house for a last farewell.

It was too early for the servants to be up, but every window of the dear house seemed to say good-by. A cool breeze brought the honeyed fragrance of white clematis and other flowers which Eliza breathed in gratefully with head thrown back. Only the black shepherd dog knew of her early rising and he stood close by, rubbing his nose against her dress. She let her disengaged hand caress his head while her eyes took in further details. At the right of the yard sloped the vegetable garden; beyond that was the plum orchard, and below that the creek. The plum orchard was not so attractive now as it had been in the spring; for then the ground beneath the blossoming trees was so thickly spread with violets that you feared to tread lest you destroy them. On the left of the yard was the woody cows' lot, a box hedge separating that from the yard. Beyond the cows' lot was the apple and peach orchard. Dew berries grew

there and once they had caught, right among the berries, a white rabbit with pink ears! It was wonderful, and the children had concluded God had dropped it down for them. Beyond the orchard, wheat fields, now golden, waved like beckoning wands. It was toward these that Eliza's journey lay.

Stooping, she kissed the old shepherd dog, saying, "I must say good-by to some one, doggie, if it's only you." Then she made him go back to the house, laughing softly at his seeming reluctance to do so. "It's so lovely to be out early," she said, jumping up and down. "No wonder Shepherd wants to go along, but I don't want Shepherd, for he might catch my dress and try to pull me back like he did once when I was little and ran off. I am going on my own hook for once. Oh, look at the lovely cobwebs stretching over that rose bush. I believe the fairies have been at work. If I had been up a little earlier I might have caught one—that big thing couldn't be a spider web surely! Oh, look at that blue bluebird! I never was so happy in my life—never!"

But difficulties began to arise before she had gone very far. The satchel grew so heavy she had to change it continually from one hand to the other. She wondered why she had ever attempted such a silly thing as loading herself down with it. "I

couldn't have done without it," she said, "for nobody ever travels without clothes, yet, how ever am I going to get there with it? It feels like lead, it's so heavy."

In about an hour the burden became intolerable and she sat down under a big oak tree to rest and think. She wiped the moisture from her forehead and looked up the dusty road that seemed endless. As she looked her courage began to wane. After all, what did clothes matter? The important thing was to get there. About seven miles more lay ahead and the day was growing hotter. Slowly she opened her grip and examined its contents. There was certainly no use taking a change of shoes or two dresses. Separating the things into piles, she discarded everything except one dress and some handkerchiefs. These she put back in the grip, then searched for a place to conceal the others. Some hogs were rooting in a haystack near. She drove them away and tucked her garments into the scooped out place they had made, pushing them back as far as she could reach. With a sigh of relief, she resumed her journey.

The August sun grew hotter and hotter. The road grew longer and the dust got deeper. Before she was beyond the boundary of her own farm she felt covered with dust and grime. A little negro girl peeping through a rail fence attracted her attention.

"Well, I'll declare if it isn't Laura Belle, Aunt Sukie's child! How you have grown," cried Eliza, glad now to see a familiar face.

"I'm nine an' er half," Laura Belle declared, grinning.

"Are you 'specially busy?" asked Eliza sweetly. "For if you are not, I wish you would go with me and carry this grip some. Do you want to?"

"Yas'um—leastways, I would ef I wuzn't lookin' ter ketch some pattridges in my trap an' I has ter stay 'roun' here an' watch out fur 'em," answered Laura Belle.

"This isn't the time of year to catch partridges," said Eliza. "You know they have their little birds now and if you caught the mother they'd starve. You surely wouldn't want to do a thing like that! Anyway, by helping me you would be making some money. Listen to this." She shook her purse temptingly. Laura Belle grinned some more and her eyes grew big.

"Whar's you gwine?" she asked noncommittantly.

"To town," answered Eliza, smiling. "I wish we might meet up with somebody we knew, who would let us ride."

"I'll go with you *part* of the ways," said Laura Belle, picking up the grip and starting off. Eliza lingered, looking at her critically.

"If you had on a nicer dress, Laura Belle, and if your mother knew you were going, I might take you all the way. Aunt Sukie wouldn't like you to go to town with those rags on."

"Ma's washin' down by the spring, so I kin slip in der front way an' git my clothes 'thout her seein' me."

"I won't have anything like that," declared Eliza. "Whoever goes with me must do it right and not have any underhanded ways. Couldn't you come out and tell her plainly that *I asked* you to go?"

"I mought be able to 'suade her," said Laura Belle, who had suddenly formed an intense desire to see the city; "an' den ergin I moughtn't. 'Twouldn't be der furst time I have run off noways."

"I know that," answered Eliza reflectively, "but in history, Laura Belle, campaigns were always more successful where leaders were honest and upright. I say again, I won't be underhanded, Laura Belle."

"Here's der cabin," said the girl. "I'll go git 'em on an' you wait here. Yes'um" (at Eliza's unasked question), "yes'um, I'll tell her." But Eliza did not hear her mutter under her breath, "if I sees her." She did not have long to wait. In about five minutes Laura Belle came running

back wearing a clean dress, her face slick from its recent soap scrub.

"How nice you look," said Eliza. "Did you have much trouble persuading Aunt Sukie?"

"No'm."

"I didn't think you would. It's always best to be open about things, Laura Belle."

"Yes'um."

"We would have felt like the very old bad man if we had stolen off, Laura Belle."

"Yes'um" (fainter).

"It would have been almost as bad as house breaking."

No answer.

"It is so much nicer to have you along," she said. "I was getting lonesome. I don't see why on earth I didn't make Susan come. Susan never seems to take to things I plan. I would give anything if Susan was exactly like me—*anything*. Twins ought to be alike 'cause she's half of me like the half of an apple, but, though we're alike on the outside, we ar'n't on the inside a bit. I'm glad I'm like myself, though, because I am wonderful about imagining and Susan can't imagine a bit. It's like having something all your own to keep cheerful with. It's a bubbling spring, Laura Belle, that never goes dry—it's—it's better than a gold mine, Laura Belle."

"Ma'am?" (puzzled).

"When you get tired of that grip, I'll carry it awhile," said Eliza. "You ought to have seen it awhile ago, I left most of the things in a straw-stack."

"I kin tote it," said Laura Belle. "Here comes Jack. I never kin seem ter leave dat dog behin'." A little fox terrier ran up, wagging its tail.

"It's nice to have him come," said Eliza, stooping to pat him on the head. "Nice doggie, Jack, you're going along to keep the buggers off us, ar'n't you?"

"What buggers?" asked Laura Belle suspiciously.

"Why, didn't you know we'd have to sleep on the way, perhaps? Of course we may make it before dark, but I imagine we'll get to Mud-creek about that time where we can camp out. That's lots of fun. Did you ever try it?"

"No'am," said Laura Belle, in whose mind was forming a wild idea of abandoning the chase and striking for home.

"We did once," said Eliza cheerfully. "We had tents and things and a cook and even a mosquito bar over us. If you've never done it you don't know how nice it feels to lie awake at night looking right up at the stars until you go to sleep. I always have wanted to go again. Let's climb the

fence, Laura Belle, and get out of this dust. I imagine it will be a closer cut through the fields, anyway."

They climbed the fence and kept to the fields mostly, which no doubt was the cause of Johnson's missing them in his search back and forth on that road. However, instead of shortening the route as Eliza expected, it really prolonged it for they had to go back several times because of impassable places. Intent on what she was doing, Eliza forgot about dinner until late in the afternoon. "Why, I know you must be hungry, Laura Belle," she said suddenly. "Open that grip and I'll give you something to eat. There! we'll eat as we go. It's a little late for dinner and too early for supper."

"I wishes we had er place ter git some water," said Laura Belle, her hunk of buttered bread fast disappearing.

"We will get to Mr. Isreal's farm soon," said Eliza, who was well acquainted with the route, "and then you can go to the back door and get some water and bring some out to me."

Pausing often to point out things of interest; resting every now and then because Laura Belle got tired, the hours flew and it was almost dark when they reached Mud-creek and rested on its banks. Eliza took her shoes off and dipped her

feet in and out of the water awhile. "This creek isn't so nice as ours at home," she said, "but it's deeper. I believe it is over my head in some places. Don't I wish I had my fishing rod, for I am too tired to go another step to-night—that's certain."

Laura Belle said nothing, but the whites of her eyes grew larger as night approached.

"Eliza," she at last whispered hoarsely, "supposin' dere's snakes on dese here banks?"

"I am not afraid, Laura Belle," said Eliza sweetly, composing herself as she spoke, and resting her head against the grassy bank. "I hope I'll go to sleep right away and not wake up till morning. I am so tired that I think I shall."

"Ef I wuzn't skeered," said Laura Belle, "I'd light out an' run home right now. It 'ud be er heap easier dan er settin' here all night."

"Only wicked people are scary, Laura Belle," said Eliza, "and you know very well that *we* are not wicked."

"We've runned erway," said Laura Belle soberly.

"But they were all told," argued Eliza. "We've got that to the good. I wouldn't be ashamed to go to heaven this very night and tell God what I've done. We wouldn't have to go to heaven to do it though, for God is right inside of us, Laura Belle—a little piece of God, of course. Mammy Mat said I asked her when I was little to let me cut her open and see what God looked like."

"Oh, Lordy!" groaned Laura Belle, whose conscience was pricking terribly. She covered her face with both hands.

"Let me tell you a tale, Laura Belle," said Eliza. "Maybe that will get you sleepy. Once there was a good little girl and a bad little girl. No use telling how they acted, for you naturally know. Well, when the good little girl died, she went to Heaven of course, and she played 'See-saw,' and 'Base,' and everything nice with the bright angels up there and had good things stacked up for her to last forever and ever; and then, when the little bad girl died and—"

"Don't tell me no mo'," said Laura Belle, "I'ze de bad girl cause I hain't never tole my ma whar I'ze gwine terday, an' I tole *you* er story." Her voice broke and Eliza couldn't help but pity her.

"I must say I'm surprised," said Eliza after a pause. "But you've confessed, and that will make you feel a sight better. If your conscience don't prick any more, you'll get sleepy. Now let's shut our eyes, Laura Belle, and we'll soon be off."

A certain expression that appeared on Laura Belle's face made Eliza sit up straight.

"I actually believe I'm not so sleepy after all," she said. "You were nice to come with me, Laura Belle, and I am going to tell you something lovely I made up. I have told it to Stella and Susan lots

of times. It is about an old wolf, who always walked on his *hind* legs and talked just like a person! Then there was a mean wolf, who was always trying to catch the good wolf unawares. And so, one day when the good wolf had walked miles and miles to get some rhubarb for his baby wolf, he reached home to find his baby wolf and wife wolf all gone—stolen, Laura Belle! And he hunted and hunted for them until at last he reached an old house in the deepest, darkest center of a deep woods,"—Eliza paused, for Laura Belle was sitting on her toe and was trying to crowd closer.

"Why, what on earth is the matter?" asked Eliza. "Don't you like my tale?"

"Yas'um—no'am—leastways—I means no'am," answered Laura Belle, her eyes rolling and her teeth chattering.

"I actually believe you are scared, you silly child," said Eliza disgustedly. "You hav'n't any sense, Laura Belle. Good-night. I'm so sleepy I don't know what to do, anyway. Shut your eyes and I'll say, 'Eny meny miny mo, catch a nigger by his toe, if he hollows let him go, eny meny miny mo'; or, would you rather have this, 'Fee, fie, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishmun; be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread'?"

Laura Belle's eyes had grown larger and larger.

She was frightened within an inch of her life, and had fully made up her mind that as soon as Eliza slept, she was going to run back home as fast as possible. Eliza now found that she could not prop her eyes open a minute longer.

"Good night, Laura Belle," she said sleepily, "rest well, for we've done a big kindness to-day. It was the best day's work in the world. Good night." Turning over, she lifted her face to the stars and was soon asleep.

An hour passed. If any one had chanced that way he would have thought her one of the lost babes in the wood (for the other had flown). She lay on a nest of late summer foliage—mint, ferns and grasses. A breeze fanned the curls over her face and she smiled in her sleep to thank the breeze.

CHAPTER VI

THAT GOOD MAY COME OF IT

"ELIZA—ELIZA"—the voice sounded a great way off—"Eliza! wake up, dear. I never saw a child sleep so soundly."

Eliza opened her eyes. The voice belonged to a man stooping near her.

"Where on earth did you come from, Mr. Champe?" she asked. It was yet night for the stars filled the shining land overhead.

"I came from Glenraven, where I hastened on account of your letter. Your mother is very anxious about you."

"I am sorry for that," said Eliza. "Mother ought to know I'll be taken care of."

"You are chilly," said Mr. Champe solicitously. "Oh, little dream girl mine, come, let me wrap my buggy robe around you."

"I wish you would," said Eliza.

He lifted her and carried her to his buggy a few yards away.

"Well, if there isn't Laura Belle," exclaimed Eliza, seeing that little darky seated in the foot of the buggy, hugging the dog Jack with both arms.

"She's a deserter," said Mr. Champe, smiling. "We can't scold her though, for I couldn't have found you if I hadn't first found her. You should have seen her when I ran her down. She was chasing up the road yelling as loud as she could and shying at her own shadow. When I tried to catch her she yelled louder than ever. It took me about twenty minutes to make her understand that I wasn't going to injure her. Then I made her come back to help locate your camping place. She was very much opposed to coming."

"I thought you wuz er wolf er standin' on hits hin' legs," said the cowardly Laura Belle.

"She was mighty good company for me," said Eliza. "Wasn't it yesterday or was it the day before when we went off together?"

"It was to-day," said Mr. Champe; "it is only nine o'clock now."

"It seems like it was longer, somehow," said Eliza.

For some time they both were silent. The quiet stillness of the summer's night was broken only by the horse's hoofs as he trotted quickly toward home. Suddenly Mr. Champe stooped and lifted Eliza's face to his.

"What was it you had to tell me? Tell me quick —now," he said.

"Sir?" Eliza spoke slowly—uncertainly.

"You must remember your letter, Eliza. What was the something you were going to tell me?"

Eliza did not speak.

"Did you hear me?" Mr. Champe spoke shortly. "Go on, dear. Don't you remember?"

"I remember well enough," said Eliza sweetly.

"Then tell me; I can't half wait."

Eliza slowly shook her head. She didn't know what possessed her, but to tell the secret she thought she had discovered—her mother's, not her own—suddenly seemed like a sort of betrayal, and she was incapable of telling it.

"Did you hear me?" persisted Mr. Champe.

Eliza shook her head more resolutely. Mr. Champe drew her to him and kissed her twice. She returned the kiss, clinging to his neck as a baby might have done. Then she found her voice.

"I can't, Mr. Champe. Isn't it funny that I went through so much to tell you, and now I can't? I don't know what's the matter. I—er—just can't —that's all. Something won't let me, Mr. Champe. I hate to mind that something, but I have to.

"There are other things—little things—though that I want to tell you about," she added brightly, smiling, and hoping Mr. Champe would smile too.

"I am very much disappointed," said Mr. Champe, *"very."* "You are unsatisfactory, Eliza.

I don't see why you don't tell me. I would never mention it if you didn't wish." He kissed her again, then lighted a fragrant cigar and began to smoke. "Tell me the other little things, then," he said presently. "I suppose I must be contented with a half loaf."

"Mother can tell you the other," said Eliza consolingly. She really felt very dissatisfied with herself. "And the other little things are about Mr. Hobbs and his bad management of our place—and then, there's some trouble with notes mother's having. You are a lawyer and know how to do anything," she added in a quaint way.

"And I will—anything I *can* do," he said decidedly. Then he added quietly, "For there's nobody's little girl I love as well as I love you."

"Do you really mean that?" she asked with shining eyes. "Do you really *mean* it?"

"Indeed I do—every word of it."

"Good!" said Eliza, pressing his hand happily.

Mrs. Dudley's first words on seeing Eliza were not at all what any one would have expected: "Eliza, my little girl, don't you think you made a mistake, darling?" Her arms were around Eliza, but her eyes—such eyes—looked squarely into Mr. Champe's. "How can I thank you enough!" she said.

Eliza wriggled from her mother's clasp and

looked upon everybody. Mr. Champe had sent a fore-runner to announce her discovery, so, the different expressions on the different faces were interesting. "A million years have gotten jumped into one little day," Eliza exclaimed. "I feel like —like—who was that man who slept for twenty years, Mother?"

"Don't you think it was a mistake to go?" her mother asked again.

"Well, Mother, *no, I don't!* I am sorry you worried. I thought you'd understand and not worry, Mother. But, it wasn't any mistake. Good will be sure to come of it, Mother, for I forsook you and Susan and all the rest, because it seemed the right thing to do."

Again Mrs. Dudley surprised her listener.

"If that was your reason, Eliza, you did right," she said. The confidence shining out of her eyes as they rested on Eliza was a revelation to Mr. Champe, who had watched the scene with intense interest.

But if the mother had not scolded, there were some who had, and with a vengeance. Mat, after hugging Eliza sufficiently, had given her the biggest scolding of her life, and Johnson had put in a word also whenever he could get in one edgeways. Eliza, with Susan by her side, listened patiently for awhile; then, giving a sigh, she said to Johnson,

"Get thee behind me, Satan! You are just looking at it from a selfish point-stand. Suppose I had been killed, Johnson—*what boots it?*"

Whether she knew what her words meant or not, certain it was, they struck both Mat and Johnson dumb for a minute, during which time she and Susan made their escape from the kitchen.

"Dat chile's gone plum' crazy," said Johnson, but Mat waved her rolling-pin at him for silence. "Hush, nigger," she commanded. "My chilluns ain't like other folkses' chilluns—dey's been raised on der Bible dey is, an' some niggers ain't fitten fur ter tie deir shoe laces."

After a late supper, and while the children were being taken off to bed by Mrs. Dudley, Mr. Champe drew his chair close to the lamp in the big drawing-room and took out his still unopened mail. He was in the midst of it when the mother returned and he held out Eliza's letter, saying, "I want you to read this."

Mrs. Dudley's face flushed deeply as she read. He watched her in silence.

At last she looked up, saying quietly, "Eliza is a very peculiar child—there seems a development of consciousness beyond her years. Perhaps I have taken the children too much into my confidence; but they would have it and—it seemed the right thing to do."

Mr. Champe leaned over and touched her hand. "Won't you take *me* into your confidence? Eliza refused to tell me what she had discovered, and I want very much to know."

Mrs. Dudley drew back. Into her beautiful eyes came a startled look—such as Eliza had surprised. When she spoke, there was no resentment in her voice—only a startled sweetness.

"I knew she wouldn't," she declared. "Eliza is very honorable."

"But, she meant to when she started. How could you know she wouldn't?"

"Because," answered Mrs. Dudley simply, "I was that way myself—when a child. I would do things—sacrificing freely on the spur of the moment because I was convinced it was right, then something, a sort of revelation—and I was powerless to proceed. It is something within us both that we cannot command but must obey because we realize we may have been mistaken in our first conception. Ah—it is useless to explain—no one could possibly understand except just us."

"I think I do," Mr. Champe said quietly, "and I am glad it is as it is. I feel more reconciled than I did before about Eliza's not telling me. Now, I want *you* to tell me all this trouble Eliza touched on about Mr. Hobbs and some fearfully worrying notes. I missed an important meeting to come here and I want to help you."

"Is it too late to go to the meeting now?" asked Mrs. Dudley, glancing toward the clock.

Mr. Champe opened his watch. "Look," said he, "nine fifty-five, and the meeting was at eight. No difference in the world. I have a substitute."

Mrs. Dudley sat back in her chair relieved. She found it rather comforting to tell him things for he listened with so much sympathy to very word. She ended, smiling as a child might who has a great load off its mind. "I don't see how I *can* trouble you with these matters," she said. "I know you will soon be wishing the Dudleys had never crossed your path."

"I'm not disputing that," he said, smiling. "Do you care if I smoke?"

"No, I like it."

"Smoking helps me to think and I'm glad you like it. My wife always liked it," he added, lighting a cigar as he spoke.

"While I've been watching you and listening," he said, "an idea has come to me. Why don't you let some person—a trustworthy family, and I think I know the very people—come here as caretakers and managers this winter? You need a change and don't know it. Welche and I were talking just before I left to-day about a house next to him that is for rent furnished. You could take that house, put the children in school—why, it is the *very thing!*"

If anybody else had proposed it, Mrs. Dudley would have said he was crazy. That she did not say it of Mr. Champe showed her profound respect for his opinion, not that she was in the least converted by it, as her next words proved:

"I never thought of such a thing," she said. "You must know I couldn't think of leaving home."

Mr. Champe continued as though not interrupted: "These people I suggest coming to care for the place are a Mr. and Mrs. Spencer, former managers of the old Dodd farm. They are most worthy people with an only child named Peter. I should like to see them installed here and Mr. Hobbs dismissed. Then, too, you would be doing a great kindness not only to yourself—and you really need the change more than you think—but to the people who have the house in town for rent. They need the money and there is nobody but you that I should be willing to suggest to them. Why, you would be a regular Godsend to those people, Mrs. Dudley."

Mrs. Dudley smiled. Mr. Champe had touched a vital chord—that of helping—and he knew he had, and she knew that he knew it. However, she steadfastly clung to her first resolution.

"I couldn't go, of course. I have been here so long. It will be very hard to tell Mr. Hobbs to go."

"Let me tell him," said Mr. Champe, rising. "It would give me great pleasure to dismiss Mr. Hobbs."

"I am sorry for those poor people who can't rent their house," Mrs. Dudley continued; "I—er would love to take it off their hands and it would be a relief in a great many ways to go for awhile if I thought it right, but—I've been here so long, and I don't like changes if they can be avoided."

"But can they?" he asked smiling, and held out his hand. "Good-by. I must go now. May I come again in a week and see what your decision is?"

"My decision is made," she assured him. "You know I told you that."

"Still I am coming soon again to see if you have changed your mind."

She smiled at his persistency.

"I'll let you come, of course," she said; "and you don't know how I thank you for all you've done."

"I know you do," he replied, "and I also know this, there's nobody in the world I'd rather have done it for. Rest easy about the notes. It's the simplest matter to adjust." He pressed her hand warmly, and was gone.

Mrs. Dudley stood over the children a minute as she always did before retiring. Eliza's rosy cheeks and half parted lips were too sweet not to kiss.

"You foolish, bewitched little girlie," murmured the mother, "you did it that good might come. Ah, if *you* had the making of this world, sorrow would be driven out and joy would fill all the crevices."

CHAPTER VII

MRS. DUDLEY COMES TO A DECISION

ONE morning about a week later the dapper little postman at the cross-roads station handed Johnson two letters and Johnson forthwith carefully conveyed them home and placed them beside "Miss Clarise's" plate to await her coming down to breakfast. One of the letters bore the postmark of a Southern town and the other was from the East. That they came at this particular time has a great bearing on a number of things.

"I should have been a boy," announced Susan, clinging to her mother's hand as they descended the broad stairway that morning. "One needs boys so much worse than girls."

"I would make a far better boy," declared Eliza from the other side, "for I would have *done* things."

"I wouldn't have let Mother have so much company for one thing," said Susan. It was the first time they had been without a visitor for a great while and the children appreciated it.

"Mother is a Christian—she serves people," Eliza said. "It is a right grand thing to have a Christian for a mother, Susan."

"We would all grow selfish if we remained by ourselves all the time, no matter how pleasant it might seem," said Mrs. Dudley.

As she spoke, they reached the wide open doors of the dining-room and the letters were discovered first thing. Mrs. Dudley examined them while the children hung over her. "This one is from Miss Sallie," she said, indicating the letter which bore the Southern postmark, and this—why, it must be from Aunt Jane! We'll open it first."

"How funny it is underscored," exclaimed Eliza. "Does she emphasize her words like that when she talks, Mother?"

"No—no. Only when she writes. I can't imagine what she can be writing about—Ah!"—running her eyes hastily down the page—"She is coming to visit us—Aunt Jane is actually coming after all these years. Listen, I'll read it all: 'Dear Clarise, I *very* hastily decided *last* night that I wanted to come and make you a visit *right away.* I want to stay a *long* while and see my *great nieces* whose *acquaintance* I have *never* made. My heart yearns so for *my own people,* and since your dear sister's death—*our dear Louisa*—I want *you,* and want everything *forgotten,* so I may have you *as I used to have you!* Write me at once if my coming will be *entirely* convenient, for of course it all *depends* on that. Lovingly, *your Auntie.*'"

"It's a curious letter," said the children. "What on earth does she mean, Mother?"

"Why—I was off at school when I married your dear Father, and my aunt, who had made herself my guardian, never forgave me. I couldn't do very much toward a reconciliation because your dear Father wouldn't allow it. He thought the stand she took an unwarranted prejudice against himself, but it wasn't that so much as it was because she had not been consulted. Aunt Jane is very exacting of those she loves—very tender at times—very demonstrative. I was always fond of her although she was not the least like her sister, my mother. I am the only near kindred she has, now Louise is gone. I am very glad she is coming. She has means to go wherever she likes—is financially independent—so we ought to know it is pure love that brings her to us."

"Read what Miss Sallie says," cried the children. The other letter was opened and found to contain news even more surprising.

"I have suddenly decided to marry," Miss Sallie wrote. "It is to a man I have loved for years, but this step is decided upon all in a minute. I am worried on your account, for I know you have depended somewhat on my coming back to teach. It is all a complete surprise to me, but I am very happy. Love to the dear children—in haste, your loving Sallie Gardner."

"Who'll teach us?" the children cried in dismay. "We wouldn't want anybody but Miss Sallie. Mother, what *can* we do?"

"I must think," said Mrs. Dudley. "You-all must go to school and yet—to fill her place will be impossible. I hope she may be very happy. Let's hurry and finish our breakfast so we can write to her. She must know we are glad of her happiness in spite of our loss."

It *was* a very great loss and hung like a cloud over them all day. Miss Sallie had taught them for three years—in fact, they never had another teacher. It was quite late in the afternoon when Mrs. Dudley called them to her and made known Mr. Champe's idea about the town house. "It never seemed advisable to take it until now," she said. "I do feel that it is the only thing to do."

If the millennium had been coming Eliza and Susan could not have felt more surprise. "Why didn't you tell us *before,* Mother?" they asked. "We could have been thinking it over with you. Mr. Champe must know it is best or he wouldn't have proposed it."

"I told you good would come of it—I told you so, Mother. Now if I hadn't taken that trip Mr. Champe never would have mentioned this—and where would we have been, Mother?" Eliza danced in her excitement.

"We've forgotten about Aunt Jane's coming," said Susan.

"No—no, I've been thinking of that and am quite certain Aunt Jane would far rather be with us in town for the winter. She never liked the country," answered Mrs. Dudley.

"She would like it here," said Susan decidedly, looking a little ruefully around the room. "But we can all come back next summer, Mother?"

"Of course. I hate to make a change too, Susan. I love all these things—they seem a part of us; but, I suppose I'll be better for a change. Lately I've not been able to sleep well. The maples rustling out there make me— Oh, I suppose my nerves are misbehaving."

Eliza and Susan immediately had both their arms about her.

"You shan't stay then—you shan't, Mother. And we'll pack all our own clothes, Mother. You won't have to bother about *our* things. Just you see to yours, Mother, and don't bother a bit more."

Mrs. Dudley smiled and arose. "I must write to Mr. Champe about the house at once—and to Aunt Jane," she said.

"Mother, where is Aunt Jane's last picture? We want to take a good look at her."

"It's in the right pigeon-hole in my desk. Be careful not to disturb the papers there."

Both children were soon bending over a small photograph. Aunt Jane had been taken standing. She wore a stylish black velvet dress with a great deal of trimming. Her hair was the next most conspicuous thing—gray, abundant, and stylishly combed. Her eyes were small and her mouth appeared wide, which might have been caused by the forced smile she wore. Her nose was good and straight. In her hand she held a lorgnette set with jewels.

The children examined the photograph for a long while in silence. As they placed it back, Susan looked at Eliza for an expression of approval or disapproval, but Eliza, smiling sweetly, only remarked, "She looks like a great aunt *should look* I suppose, Susan."

Of course, as soon as their going had been definitely decided upon, Eliza and Susan made a hurried trip over to Aunt Mollie's to tell the news to Stella and William. Aunt Mollie, very blunt and kind, loved them almost as her own, and as soon as they had explained everything she shook her head, saying, "Umph! Clarise is going to town to squander her money. Whoever put that silly notion in her head?"

The girls tried to explain fully—all about the bad Mr. Hobbs and how Mr. Champe had found a good

Mr. Spencer for them, and how the change would be so good for mother, but Aunt Mollie stubbornly shook her head.

"She was doing well enough here," she said. "Clarise may jump from the frying-pan into the fire. Who knows anything about this Mr. Spencer?"

"Dear Mr. Champe knows him well," said Eliza, "and you can bet your life on Mr. Champe, Aunt Mollie."

"Umph!" said Aunt Mollie again, smoothing her immaculate apron with a plump hand, "Clarise is likely to get fooled yet. She is too good. That's why we hate to see her go, I reckon, and why other folks like to see her come."

Miss Jane York's views, however, as she sat in her beautiful room overlooking the Connecticut River and read the letter from her niece, were entirely different from those of Aunt Mollie. "It is a very wise step—her moving to town. Now I shall enjoy a visit, I know. I always thought it queer her staying in that old country year in and year out. It's a wonder she hasn't died. She says she is not feeling herself—as though she had to make an excuse for moving. Dear child! She was really always my favorite until she took that unheard of step. I won't allude to that though ever again."

And she drew her lips together in a very straight line.

Miss Jane York was a woman of strong prejudices, of peculiar eccentricities, and of lively imagination. Her friends were numerous and almost entirely among the rich. At home she had the reputation of being very charitable, but no one had ever accused her of keeping her left hand in ignorance of the things done by her right hand. In fact she took particular delight in publishing to the left hand everything—little or big—and the praises of the world were her reward.

Both the nieces had been her especial charges after the death of her sister, and when Clarise had committed the girlish indiscretion of marrying without consulting her, she, angry-hurt, had washed her hands of her without a moment's hesitation, taking that love and giving it to the other sister, Louise, with whom she had made her home during the latter's lifetime. Whether their lives together had been happy no one knew, but there were *rumors* of uncongeniality. Be that as it may, certainly she had grieved as sincerely for her as her nature permitted, and the vault wherein the body rested was the most beautifully kept one in the cemetery.

Why Miss Jane had never married was a mystery to a great many. Not possessing beauty,

which is really skin deep after all, she had a splendid figure, was a brilliant conversationalist, quick at repartee, and a social success at any function. She always blew her own trumpet, so to speak, and no one who knew her was ignorant of her numerous conquests—lords among them—and, a-lacka-day, she gave the impression that there were yet hopes for more!

Having traveled over the countries of Europe, yet she had never cared to see the beautiful West of her own land. "I suppose Clarise's children are perfect little savages," she said to herself, thinking no good could possibly come from the West. Going to her desk, she took out their photograph and sat down with it in her hand. Eliza and Susan looked at her with fearless eyes. They wore simple white dresses. Their cheeks touched each other and Eliza's curls flowed over Susan's shoulders as well as her own. They appeared very happy and thoughtful—not at all like savages. Aunt Jane gazed at them for a long time, then replaced the picture without a single comment.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW IMPRESSIONS

PERHAPS if the days that followed had not been so full of everything new, Aunt Jane's arrival would have been heralded as a more notable event. Mrs. Dudley had written and begged her to postpone her visit until they were settled and everything running smoothly, but she would have none of it. "I *love* a frolic," she wrote, "and I want to *help* you get straight. It will be such fun, for as you know, I have grown just *lazy* from *disuse.*" And so, come she did, and was as good as her word in that the morning after her arrival she donned dustcap (a very fussy, beribboned one), and with skirts tucked about her, began to sweep vigorously. "What would my friends say if they could see me now?" she laughed, looking on them all from under the lacy frill with dancing eyes.

"What are your friends like?" asked Eliza in honest wonderment, for sweeping and dusting seemed such a lovely useful process if there were a necessity for one's doing it.

"They are very much like *me,* precious," said the aunt in a self-praisy voice.

Mrs. Dudley was plainly annoyed by her aunt's doing the sweeping when there was Johnson ready to do it.

"You'll ruin your clothes," she remonstrated. "Give me the broom, Aunt Jane—please do!"

"I always finish what I undertake," said the aunt determinedly, sweeping very hard under a sofa. It was a handsomely furnished room. Mrs. Dudley could well understand Mr. Champe's reluctance to ask anybody whom he did not know to take the Campbells' house. She wondered that she herself had not hesitated before assuming such a responsibility.

"Children, you must go to school. Good-by. Don't forget your lunch."

"Kiss me, both of you," cried the aunt, pursing her lips into a round shape; "good-by (gaily); I love you both and am going to call you my little jewels."

"I wiped her kiss off when she turned," whispered Susan to Eliza on their way out of the gate.

"I want to mightily," confessed Eliza. Susan noticed she was holding her hands down rigidly against her side.

"Then why on earth don't you do it?"

"It wouldn't be courteous," declared Eliza grandly.

It was the second morning after their enrollment in the public school. They entered by the side door, pupils' entrance, and walked into the hall arm in arm exactly like the picture of the two little princes in the tower. Being new, they forgot to put their hats and jackets in the cloak room, but went out as soon as reminded of it. Miss Lillian Rhodes, the teacher, watched them and she afterward said they were different from any of the other pupils—a sort of quaintness that hung about them. Being dressed exactly alike, no one could at first distinguish them apart, except that Eliza's hair hung in curls to her waist, while Susan's was in two plaits which were tied with scarlet bows at the ends. After becoming known, they were not so much alike, however. Their eyes were different in expression and color. Susan's had a quick way of seeming to see everything while Eliza's, though dreamy, saw a great deal more. Eliza's were a grayer blue, too.

"Susan," she whispered, having allowed her glance to sweep the room once, "isn't it going to be skylarky having so many to imagine stories about? Look at that thick haired boy with the black eyes and low forehead; isn't he a perfect baboon type? And the boy to our right looks exactly like a rabbit—even his mouth looks nibbly. That man talking to Miss Lillian favors a devil's horse, those green rearing ones like we had in the country."

"Hush," whispered Susan, "he is the principal. Don't you remember we saw him yesterday?"

"I remember well enough," answered Eliza sweetly, "but you can't deny he looks like a devil's horse the way he rears backwards and stalks like he is going to pounce on something. Isn't Miss Lillian sweet? I love to look at her—especially her hand with that pearl ring on it. It's right aristocratic looking, I think. What on earth is she waving it at us for?"

"Because we are talking, I guess," answered Susan, hastily assuming an upright position. (Their benches were opposite and they had been leaning across the aisle so as to whisper to each other without being heard.)

Eliza looked surprised, but smiled indulgently and settled back into her seat. Miss Sallie down in the country had not been so strict about their talking, but then she only had four pupils to control where this teacher had a big room full.

Just then Miss Lillian rose and went to the blackboard, where she began writing a long list of names with numbers opposite them. Eliza watched her silently until her curiosity got the better of her judgment and she leaned across the aisle to speak again to Susan.

"What's she writing about?"

"Names," whispered Susan, motioning Eliza to

sit back and hush, but Eliza paid no attention to her.

"What for?" Eliza whispered.

"I don't know, hush!"

Eliza turned to the neighbor on her right.

"What's that on the board for?"

"It was the examination you were in yesterday," came the answer. "The history examination of the newest pupils."

Eliza stood up and leaned far over in order to get a better view of the board. When she saw her own name at the head of the list with the highest mark she forgot everything else and spoke aloud.

"Oh, look! Susan, do look at my name at the head. Ar'n't I smart, and when I never tried at all hardly—Oh, Oh!" In her excitement she laughed gleefully. Miss Lillian turned around at once.

"Who spoke without permission?" she asked.

"I did," said Eliza, rising (Miss Sallie had always made them rise). Eliza accompanied her rising with one of her sweetest smiles because she was very pleased with herself.

"I was so glad to see my name when I never was examined that way before in my life, and to think I got on the board," she explained. "I never tried much, Miss Lillian, because I was new and all—and next time I guess I'll get two hundred, if I got *ninety-eight* this time."

Miss Lillian smiled in spite of the fact that she shouldn't. "Pupils who speak without permission are reprimanded," she explained. "Perhaps, as you are new, you do not yet know the rules."

"What's reprimanded?" asked Eliza. Susan tried to pull her down in her seat, but Eliza shook her hands off her dress skirt and added sweetly, "I don't seem to remember what that means, Miss Lillian."

All the pupils began laughing, but Miss Lillian frowned at them.

"Sit down, Eliza," she said not unkindly. "Now, take your dictionary and look up the word 'reprimanded.' I want all the pupils except Eliza and Susan, to remain after dismissal bell," she said.

"Teacher's Pets," could be heard whispered all along the aisle as they walked out of the room that afternoon. Susan looked highly scandalized, but Eliza was pleased. "It's what I always am," she asserted loud enough for the back row to hear and they looked sufficiently subdued to satisfy even her vanity.

"Isn't it grand?" she asked of Susan as they walked homeward. "To think we might still be buried in that old office studying with nobody 'cept Willie and Stella."

"I liked it," said Susan a little wistfully.

"I did too," Eliza admitted. "But I like this

better. I would never be satisfied back there again to know things like these were happening every day and I was missing it. I never told you, Susan, but I used to sometimes be imagining things when I'd come to a place where I couldn't go on. It was right pitiful I'd feel so flattish. It was like I couldn't satisfy myself all the time with *imagining* the real thing, I wanted it to *be* real sure enough. Everything's grand now—and the best of all is to think we live in the very same town with Mr. Champe."

"He's fine," said Susan with more enthusiasm than she had hitherto shown.

"If it hadn't been for me—going to get him that time—" began Eliza, but Susan stopped her ears.

"I know what's coming," she interrupted, "you've said it so much Eliza that I know it off by heart, 'if it hadn't been for me we wouldn't have been here!' "

Eliza looked at her reproachfully.

"I think you might let me brag about the one thing I love to brag about, 'specially since you see what a lovely change it made in everything," she said.

"You heap credit on yourself all the time. Why do you do it, Eliza?"

"It gives me joy," acknowledged Eliza. "I don't see why you don't like it in me, Susan."

They entered the house, skipping.

"Come back and hang up your school satchel," called Susan. Eliza returned reluctantly.

"Susan," she said, picking up her books, "if you'll take these and put them on the school shelf, I'll give you two of my agates."

"Why can't *you* do it?" asked Susan, surprised at the magnificence of the offer.

"It's against my religion," replied Eliza. "I like to drop things where I go, for then I can always find them. All I have to do is to retrace my travels."

"But why not have a place?"

"Because it's too much trouble, and besides, it's silly to have a place for things. God don't! He just puts us all here and lets us drift around and settle finally like those autumn leaves we used to try to catch. Fancy a fixed place. Ugh! I'd hate to have to live in one."

"You talk so silly, Eliza; I hate to listen to you," said Susan, taking the proffered books. "Now to-morrow you'll be saying 'Susan, where are my books? you had them last.' "

"I can't help it," sighed Eliza. "I can't seem to remember when things are placed. I'm not running on schedule time any longer, Susan."

"You never did run that way," was the reply. Susan took Eliza's shortcomings very much to heart.

"What a happy family," said Mr. Champe that same evening. They were all gathered in the big living-room. The fire in the wide fireplace was cheerfully doing its part, and the big yellow Japanese globe on the electric lamp mellowed the greens and browns of the room. It was Mr. Champe's first call. "But I have wanted to come before," he declared, lighting a cigar and pulling the two children very close to his side. "Where is your aunt? This call is on her also."

"She has a very bad headache," answered Mrs. Dudley. "She did too much to-day. That is the way Aunt Jane has always been—getting excited and overdoing—then the consequences. No one can ever do a thing with her."

"Then don't try," he recommended, seeing the worried expression in Mrs. Dudley's eyes. "Don't you like this house? Are you glad you came?" smiling.

"Yes—I am. It seems like home—more so than I ever expected. But Mat and Johnson being here make it seem so—and it is nice to know that they like it as well as we do."

"Eliza, what about you and Susan? How's public school to your liking?"

"We think it fine. Things are happening every minute," said Eliza.

"If Eliza would just keep her seat and not be

bobbing up all the time saying things," complained Susan.

"I can't seem to help it," answered Eliza. "I wish Susan would leave me alone. Anyway, I never answered a single question that Miss Lillian didn't ask."

"You answer them so funny, though," said Susan. "Now, when Miss Lillian asked the school where the Mason and Dixon's line was, Eliza bobbed right up—I knew she didn't know—and she said in her sweetest tone, 'I don't seem to remember exactly *where* it is, Miss Lillian, but I know I live on the right side of the line,' and everybody laughed."

"You little rebel," said Mr. Champe, laughing heartily.

"Mr. Champe, who is it lives next door?" asked Eliza.

"Mr. Welche—president of the Fourth National Bank. He has two youngsters about your ages."

"I've been watching them. The boy can climb as good as I can, and he rides a little better."

"I thought you said *you* could do it, Eliza," interrupted Susan.

"Well, I think I can after I practice some. I never rode standing straight up on a pony's back, but I can—at least I mean to try."

"Be careful when you do," said Mr. Champe,

"for I've known even small ponies to kick severely."

"Our Montie don't kick. When are you going to send for him, Mother?"

"Next week—if possible. He's a country pony, you know, maybe he won't like town so well."

"He'll like it better if he takes after me," said Eliza. "I'm having the time of my life."

They all laughed at her enthusiasm.

"I am afraid you are not very loyal, dear," said Mother. "New friends must not make us forget the old."

"I'm not *forgetting* them," answered Eliza. "I may want to see them real bad by next summer when we all go out there, but I'm glad summer is a long way off."

"Eliza, you put yourself in such a bad light, dear, and I know you have a warm heart really," said Mother.

"I love everybody *some,*" said Eliza. "I love you, Mr. Champe and Susan a heap, but I love myself really best because I enjoy what I do so much more than what you all do. Oh, I'm a selfish prig."

"Don't you want to see Stella already?" asked Susan, after a painful silence on her part.

"Well—Stella's a dear, but I am not pining for her yet. I'd lots rather know that doll-baby looking girl next door."

"I thought you said you didn't care for her."

"I did say that, but she is so pretty. I can't *help* loving pretty people, Susan."

"Pretty is as pretty does," quoted Mother.

"She don't do so very pretty," said Eliza. "I don't fancy the way she switches down the aisle at school, do you, Susan?"

"Yes, it's so graceful," answered Susan.

"I don't consider it so," said Eliza, inwardly determining to conquer that swaying tiptoe movement before many more days. "Her eyes would be prettier if she didn't roll them, don't you think so, Susan?"

"I like that part of them—they look so—er—interesting," replied Susan.

"Susan," said Eliza desperately, "would you like to have a *sister* like that?"

"Well—I don't know," replied Susan thoughtfully. "She is rather *disdainful* for a sister, I think."

"What's *disdainful?*" asked Eliza, feeling sure it was something very nice.

"It's feeling better than you are, I think," replied Susan.

"I'd adore to feel that way," Eliza admitted. "The trouble with me is feeling worse than I am and knowing I'm better than I'm feeling."

"I thought it was the other way," said Susan,

laughing. "You always appear to feel perfectly perfect, Eliza."

"Because I'm always making believe," said Eliza. "I'm happy to do it and—I tell you, Susan, dreaming is a lovely discovery. I don't believe Cammie Welche knows how to do it."

"You seem to have made a good study of her in a short time," laughed Mr. Champe. These children amused him and lifted him out of himself as no others had ever done. When they talked he listened intently, rarely interrupting. "What else have you found out about her?"

"She's not especially clever. She never answers questions right when she's called on," said Susan.

"I wish she *knew* she wasn't clever," said Eliza. "I hate for her to be so dull and not even to know it."

"What difference does it make to us—one way or the other?" asked Susan, surprised.

"Oh, none. I'll take it back about wanting to know her. She's so bound up in her own conceit that I am going to leave her alone *forever.*"

"You can't do it," declared Susan, shaking her head knowingly. "Eliza Dudley, I can read you like a first reader."

"You are so hateful, sometimes I just can't—stand you, Susan!"

Mr. Champe pulled her to him very close.

"Say that over again, Eliza—and see if you can't change it a little," he told her.

As he said good-by some minutes later, he told Mrs. Dudley that Mr. Welche had asked to call and pay his respects and if agreeable he would bring him the following evening.

CHAPTER IX

HARRY AND ELIZA BECOME FELLOW WORKERS

SUSAN'S predictions soon came true. Almost any day after school Cammie Welche could be seen slipping through the fence that separated the Welches' yard from that of the Dudleys, Eliza joining her with a gurgle of delight. Cammie's brother Harry, who was as homely as Cammie was pretty, would soon follow and the four children—including Susan—had splendid times in the yard, or, when the weather was rainy, they hastened to the attic where games were played. There was a trapeze there and one of Mother's trunks full of ancient clothing. The floor was smooth and good for dancing so that it was an ideal place.

Cammie's beauty held a sort of charm over Eliza. "I don't like her so awful much," she explained to Susan, "but she's so beautiful I love to have her near me."

"She gets everything out of you, Eliza," warned Susan, who had that very day seen Eliza working all Cammie's arithmetic examples and neglecting her own lessons.

"I get my pleasure out of it," said Eliza. "After awhile she will need me so much and I will love that."

"I think you are right weak minded," said Susan disgustedly.

Eliza looked at her a minute before speaking, then, "Susan, I *like what I like.* Cammie is the most beautiful girl I ever saw. Even in a picture I never saw eyes and teeth so pretty. She *is* dull in her books, but what difference will that make when she can travel and learn things that way?"

"She's got you hoodooed," said Susan, very much displeased.

Harry's homeliness was accentuated by Cammie's beauty. He was the boy whom Eliza had likened to a rabbit that first day at school and as you knew him his resemblance to that animal became stronger. His lips had a way of standing apart, and his teeth were large and well separated. His complexion was pink and white, his eyes a golden brown and inexpressive. Although a year younger than Cammie, he made much the best average in the same grade. From the first he had exhibited a dog-like fondness for Susan and Eliza, and had shown his love by slipping pears into their desks on the sly. Eliza had taken hers and presented it to Miss Lillian right before him, but Susan, afraid of giving offence, had slipped hers

into her satchel and thanked him for it after school. Afterward, he continued his attentions in different ways, gradually showing a preference for Eliza, who did not encourage him. It was only when he began doing stunts daily on his pony to attract her that she noticed him and finally permitted him to teach her the tricks. One day she said: "Harry, how old do boys have to be before they get a mustache?"

"I don't know. Why?" asked Harry, swinging from a high limb, his eyes fastened on her adoringly.

"Oh, I think it would be becoming to your face, that's all," she replied.

"All right," he said, "I'll get father's razor and shave to-night."

"You'd better wait," said Eliza. "Now that we've found a way, I'm satisfied. I've been studying about how you could fix your mouth for a long time. I am fond of mustaches if—if they are parted a little bit like Mr. Champe's—and have the feel of his when you kiss."

"I'll shave my face to-night," said Harry decisively.

"Very well," said Eliza as though dismissing the subject, "but I'm not sure but what you'll look even curiouser with a mustache. It might make you seem like a midget to have one before you're grown."

"Then I'll wait," said Harry resignedly. "You are so changeable, Eliza, nobody knows how to take you."

"They don't have to," answered Eliza, smiling sweetly. "I must say I think it's very kind in me trying to fix you up when you don't even thank me."

"You bet I do," said Harry, jumping down and standing by her. "I'd prove it if I knew how."

"There is one thing I'd like to know about," said Eliza, "and I don't like to ask Cammie. Where did she get that scar high up on her forehead under her hair?"

"It happened when she was little. Her nurse let her fall and cut herself on the round of a high chair," said Harry.

"Was that the way of it! Why I had imagined it happened when she was out West that time and some Indians started to scalp her and cut a little bit then stopped because she was so pretty. Falling out of a chair is so commonplace."

"Eliza," said Harry suddenly. "I'll tell you what I've decided on. I want to make you my assistant editor in our club. You'll be it, won't you?"

"I'd love it. When does it meet?"

"Every Thursday at different houses. I'll put yours and Susan's names down as members. Will you go with me next time?"

"Yes, Susan and I will be glad to."

"Somebody else will have to take Susan—I'll see to it. One boy takes each girl."

"Is it always the same boy?" asked Eliza anxiously. She did not relish the idea of Harry's company *every* time.

"Why, er—no. But I could take *you* every time, and as we're editors together maybe it would be best."

"No, indeed," said Eliza, "I prefer a change."

"All right," said Harry cheerfully. "Only don't go back on the editorship."

"I won't. Let's look over the paper now. We can sit on your front steps."

Cammie and Susan came up late and found them bent over a tablet, laughing and making a joke out of the work.

"We're writing our paper for the club," explained Eliza. "Harry is going to typewrite it down in his father's office to-morrow. It's grand. Listen to this: 'Owing to the large membership of the club and to the work piled on the Editor, it has been considered necessary to appoint Miss Eliza Dudley, assistant editor.' I can do it, too. That's why I feel so proud knowing what's in me. Oh, I'm brimming over with ideas already. Harry, couldn't we have a little story every week? Just a short one that wouldn't take up too much time?"

"Why—er—yes, I reckon so. We never have had a story, but I think it's a good suggestion," said the Editor-in-chief, who would have agreed to anything Eliza might suggest.

"I hope it will make it more interesting," said Cammie. "We always fidget when Harry's paper is read."

Harry colored but said nothing; Cammie's remark was so unkind.

"What else does the club do?" asked Susan, anxious to relieve Harry.

"Well," said Harry, "when the notes and minutes are read and after the paper is read, we all play games and then have refreshments. It's stacks of fun. They meet with us Thursday night, so be sure to come."

"What about our lessons?" asked Susan.

"That's so," said Eliza. "I don't believe we can join if it's on Thursday night. Why can't it be on Friday, Harry?"

"It can," Harry replied promptly. "I'll have it changed to that day."

"You talk like you are some pumpkins in the club," said Cammie, shrugging her pretty shoulders. "You know, Harry, changing the day will have to be voted on at the next meeting. Some of them may object to Fridays—you know Clara's dancing class meets then."

"I'll get Mrs. Mathews to say it isn't convenient to meet at *our* house this week except on Friday," said Harry, "for I am determined Eliza and Susan shall come when it meets with us."

"Well—you'll have to attend to it and see that everybody is told," said Cammie.

"There comes Miss Caldwell to give you your music lesson, Eliza," announced Susan, "and I bet you hav'n't practiced."

"I have—some," said Eliza, rising reluctantly. "Harry, we'll finish to-morrow. I'll write some during recess."

When Eliza entered the parlor she had kept Miss Caldwell waiting five minutes by the clock. Miss Caldwell believed in punctuality, but her nerves would have settled back and behaved themselves if Eliza had known her lesson, which she did not. With many mistakes she floundered through her two pieces, patiently playing over the required bars without a murmur. Eliza really thought she was doing fairly well when, while the scales were in progress, Miss Caldwell lost patience and rapped her over the fingers twice where they lay on the piano keyboard. As no one had ever struck her before, the sensation was interesting. Eliza looked up, smiling sweetly although her face flushed.

"You've lost your self-control," she said, rising and moving toward the door.

"Come back!" commanded Miss Caldwell, but Eliza vanished into the hall where she ran against Susan.

"What on earth!" exclaimed Susan.

"Ask *her,*" said Eliza, shaking her head mockingly as Miss Caldwell's calls grew louder. "Where is everybody?"

"Mother and Aunt Jane are in the library."

Eliza flew into that room, her eyes sparkling and her face very rosy.

"Oh, Mother, Miss Caldwell is too funny! When she rapped me over the fingers her eyes flashed like sparks of fire. It was a peculiar adventure for me—I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

"What in the world, Clarise?" asked Aunt Jane, "and what is that dreadful commotion in the parlor? She must be a very ill mannered person, I must say, to create such a disturbance. Not at all the proper person, I should say—you must make a change. Our little dears must have people of culture around them."

Mrs. Dudley had gone into the parlor while the aunt was speaking. Eliza looked at her aunt with startled eyes.

"Miss Caldwell is lovely, Aunt Jane," said Eliza. "Nobody is *complaining* of her. I didn't mean it in that light."

Susan, who had followed Eliza, remarked: "Miss Caldwell *is* nice, only I am afraid she is very poor. Cammie told me this evening that she had to support several brothers and sisters with her teaching."

Eliza looked startled again. Her mother had been gone into the parlor some time and she wondered why she did not return. She felt the need of her now very much.

"Well," said Aunt Jane meaningly, "she won't keep her class I dare say if—these exhibitions occur often."

Eliza softly left the room.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Dudley had gone to Miss Caldwell at once. If Miss Caldwell was angry, she did not remain so long. No one could with this dear little mother explaining and softening everything. "Eliza is so conscientious, she will come to you of her own accord later—when she sees herself in the wrong," Mrs. Dudley said. "She has always hated her practicing, but in the country she did not have a good teacher like you, and I had hoped so much now. She really has a wonderful voice which will need cultivation later. They have not been brought up as most children because of a great sorrow that came to me when they were babies—I have never scolded or punished them, which makes them different—

and, while I am not unconscious of their faults, you yourself will see what I mean about Eliza. Unless I am very much mistaken, she will come to you of her own accord—"

The parlor door burst open and Eliza ran in. She held her head up and her eyes looked fearlessly into those of her teacher.

"It was those old scales and fingering, Miss Caldwell," she spoke rapidly—"I hate to have to put my forefinger and third finger just where it says to —it's very troublesome having to watch your fingers—it's a perfect nuisance."

No one said a word,Eliza crossed to her mother's side and leaned confidingly against her.

"Miss Caldwell, is it—I always thought you taught mostly for pleasure—enjoyed it you know. Do you—teach for the money that's in it?"

"I'm afraid we all do that," said Miss Caldwell, a smile coming into her eyes. Mrs. Dudley pressed Eliza's hand, but remained silent.

"It must be a very hard way to earn money," said Eliza thoughtfully—" 'specially when you have—have balky pupils."

"It is, dear, very." Miss Caldwell's voice was uncertain.

"I never saw this light turned on it before," said Eliza. "I'm determined, though, that it won't be

such hard work for you any more, Miss Caldwell, as far—as *I* go."

It was then her mother stooped and folded her in her arms.

CHAPTER X

FERMENTATIONS

"WHAT impressed you the most, Eliza, when we first came?"

"The crunching of gravel on the streets—and the hills we went up and down—up and down before we reached this house."

"It didn't me. It was all these houses so close—and the milk man's bell every morning—and people going, going, coming, coming, and we watching them all and thinking—"

"Yes—" Eliza interrupted—"thinking what? Wondering what *they* were thinking and where they were going—and if they really knew themselves. It reminds me of those ants we used to watch carrying crumbs of bread—hastening on, each one no doubt knowing where its house was and what was in that house—and—God manages it all."

"And knows the number of every ant," put in Susan breathlessly.

"I'm interested in all this," said Eliza, waving her hand to include the universe. "I would like to know the outs and ins of everybody I see."

And they did become acquainted with the "outs and ins" of a great many that winter, for Mrs. Dudley found the sick at her very doors here—and the children often hearing of unfortunate cases, appealed to her—and never in vain.

There was one child in school who interested Eliza—not as Cammie Welche interested her, for this child was by no means beautiful. In fact, her face reminded one of a silent dun-colored calf. Her eyes were brown and mutely raised to Eliza during recess when all the other children left this girl standing alone against the outside wall of the school building. Eliza looked at her hesitatingly at first because she didn't know how to approach her without giving offence. She was the poorest clad girl in school—her calico skirts clung to her as if the undergarments were too scant for warmth. One other thing was soon apparent, this girl—Maggie Romer—rarely came to school on Monday. An instant conjecture led Eliza to say, "It's to help her mother wash—of course. Monday is wash day, I suppose."

Maggie's hands were red, and when Eliza touched them—after becoming acquainted—they felt rough like a grater. Maggie also wore strings for garters and the ribbon tied at the end of her one plait was worn almost to shreds.

Eliza's imagination was on a rampage. She

made Mat cook her a splendid basket one day and when recess came invited Maggie to join her at lunch.

Susan, who had not seen the inner workings of Eliza about Maggie, remonstrated in low voice: "You act so curious, Eliza, none of us know her."

"I like to do it—you don't understand, Susan," whispered Eliza, nodding her curls at Maggie and smiling her to come on.

Susan followed a little ashamed for all the girls were watching, but loyalty to Eliza made her stick. They found a quiet nook in the corner of the yard where the lemon tarts and chicken were shared generously.

"You must have another tart, Maggie," said Eliza—"Why, how did you hurt your hand?"

Maggie drew down her sleeve and looked at the ground. "It happened—" she began, but Eliza hushed her with, "Never mind, dear—nobody *has* to tell. "Hush," as Maggie began to speak—"I understand, Maggie. You must come to see us some time soon."

. . . . . .

The class in geography was in progress. Around the school room could be heard the usual subdued shuffling and shifting in seats. Miss Lillian stood in front of the room, her book held open.

"What is a zone, Eliza?"

Eliza seemed to be sitting there in her own seat, but in truth she was in her bedroom at home and Maggie was sitting in Eliza's white rocking chair and Eliza was standing beside the chair holding a toasted marshmallow to Maggie's lips saying, "one-two-three—go ahead, Maggie, open your mouth."

Twice within the last week Eliza had hastened into the schoolroom her curls flying and her cheeks pink from running. Twice the tardy bell was on the point of being rung when she had taken her seat near the scandalized Susan who knew the reason of it all. Eliza had stopped on the way to look at a huge poster! It was a big flaming red and yellow thing, representing a drunken man beating his child while a frail woman in the background pled with him to stop. Susan could not pull Eliza away, and so she deserted her. Eliza had never imagined anything like that, so no wonder her heart thumped and her brain worked amazingly. It was the most natural thing that she began to think of Maggie's scar—the hurt on her arm—and to wonder.

Her imagination about Maggie would have filled a book. She determined to do something very grand for her—she would take her home and give her things she had never had—yes—she would give her gold bracelet to her! One morning when they were rather early for school, Eliza had dragged the unwilling Susan past Maggie's house—a little

brown house that *looked* like Maggie—and had lingered on the sidewalk as long as Susan would, in hopes that Maggie might appear. Eliza finally concluded that she must be in the kitchen helping her mother cook. "But there are not so very many clothes lines, Susan. I wish I knew where they hung them all, for I am sure that her mother has to wash for a living, because her father is a drunkard and—"

"How do you know all that?" asked Susan, astonished.

"Oh, I just know. Let's go back by that picture, Susan, and see exactly how they do when they are drunk."

But Susan refused point blank. "Eliza Dudley, I hav'n't any patience with you, at all," she said.

"You are certainly unaccommodating for a twin," sighed Eliza, "but it doesn't matter—I can go alone."

Thus had her mind been fermenting for a week, so, no wonder Miss Lillian had to repeat her question.

"Eliza, what is a zone?"

Eliza (to herself): "Maggie, didn't you ever taste a marshmallow before? Why, Maggie—"

"E-li-za!"

"Ma'am?" Eliza awoke to surroundings. Susan hid her face as Eliza rose, smiling sweetly.

"Did you hear the question I asked?" Miss Lillian looked severe.

"It seems to me it was about marshmallows—where they—grew—or something" (sweetly).

"Sit on the front bench!"

Now, it was bad enough for boys to have to occupy the front bench, but a terrible disgrace for girls.

Eliza rose. The clanging of dismissal bell at that moment gave everybody something to do besides watch her, which was a blessed thing thought Susan, as she mournfully gathered her books together and those of her twin. This was the worst thing that had ever befallen Eliza. Susan hated to tell them at home, and it was very hard for Susan to make up an excuse until Eliza could come with her own excuses. She had unbounded faith in Eliza's power to get off easy with Miss Lillian, but lacking imagination, Susan must have facts. "What can I say at home?" she whispered, passing Eliza on her way out. "Say that Miss Lillian wanted to see me about something very important," answered Eliza, smiling. Susan wondered why *she* couldn't have thought of this, and went out wondering.

Miss Lillian came and stood by Eliza after the children had all gone. Eliza looked up and found Miss Lillian's face much softer than it had been a few minutes previously.

"Then you were stern—for—for effect?" said Eliza.

"Yes—partly. I understood of course that something weighty was at work in your head—when it shouldn't have been, but the children couldn't understand—and so—"

"I see," Eliza smiled her sweetest. "I'm sorry I can't tell you all about it, Miss Lillian."

"Why not?" Miss Lillian sat down by Eliza and looked persuasive. Eliza shook her head thoughtfully.

"I don't suppose it would really *hurt* to tell—it isn't like Maggie had told me herself. I have just found it all out."

"Maggie Romer?" asked Miss Lillian.

Eliza nodded.

"What about her?"

"I've worried about her—that's all. She has such a time of it—washing on Mondays and her father's drinking as he does and abusing her."

"What!"

"It must be awful to have a drunkard for a father, Miss Lillian—you must see it. I'm very much concerned about Maggie."

"I knew she was very poor," said Miss Lillian. "But all this is news. How did you find it out, Eliza?"

Then Eliza told everything and last of all about

the hurt on Maggie's arm. As she proceeded, Miss Lillian began to smile and after Eliza finished, she took her hand.

"You funny child," she exclaimed. "I can clear up some of the mystery that has been worrying you. I don't think her father drinks at all—I have never heard of it, anyway. And that scar was caused by some hot coffee scalding her—she would have told you if you had let her."

"The drinking is the worsest thing," said Eliza, not at all abashed; "are you sure he don't do it, Miss Lillian?"

"Pretty sure."

"Then I guess I'll be going. You don't want me any longer?"

"No, Sweetheart."

Eliza flushed with pleasure. Miss Lillian had called her "Sweetheart." It was like pouring oil on every wound. Susan should be told, and then she would think it not a bad idea to stay in. Oh, she was glad!

"You yourself say she is very poor. Is there any way to help about that? She wouldn't mind my taking her things, for she likes me, Miss Lillian," said Eliza.

"I don't wonder. I've noticed how sweet you are to her."

"As for that—" Eliza grandly waved her hand

—"who wouldn't be! She's a very good girl. I want her very much for my friend."

"If you feel so—nothing you give her will be misconstrued," said Miss Lillian.

. . . . . .

Eliza wasted very little time making her mother acquainted with her wishes and Maggie's whole family—the father out of work; the mother not strong; a little brother—all these were befriended.

Mrs. Dudley was a good angel in many homes, and her influence was felt by some who watched from afar. Mr. Welche was one of these. He was a narrow man—cold, unresponsive. He had never done a service for any one that had not a selfish motive behind it. His own children did not know him, and he did not cultivate their acquaintance. If he felt a fondness for any human it was for his boy Harry, but the bond between them was not a strong one. Harry was too homely for his father, who never looked inside, to take any especial pride in him. For the girl, he did not care at all. She was too much like himself—cold, unlovable, unresponsive. Her beauty did not appeal to him because it was of the brunette type which he never admired. He had noticed the growing attachment between her and Eliza and was rather pleased than otherwise. The Dudley family amused him. He often watched their windows from his dining-room

when he took his breakfast alone, waited on only by his housekeeper. He could not complain of the big unseeing eyes of windows now, for everything about the place was *light*. He had called several times. The worldy aunt—rather gushing but no doubt well meaning; the widow, very young in her black, with unusual eyes; the two girls who hung back from him and refused to be very friendly; all attracted him in an unaccountable way. "Champe seems to like it there too—confound him," he would say to himself, and then wonder why he had said it.

To tell the truth, Mr. Champe was himself a little troubled about going so often, but it seemed the most natural thing in the world to do once he had got started. Almost weekly the children came to his office with an invitation to dine, and he accepted because he *wanted* to. It was the best bit of home life he had enjoyed for many years and they always treated him the way he loved to be treated: the children welcoming him with open arms, the aunt with unmistakable kindliness, the mother—whose eyes were as no other eyes in the whole world—believed in him. Eliza always called him "dear" now and made him her great confidant. One day she began speaking of Mr. Welche: "I don't fancy him, dear—I must try, of course, but it will be a hard job because I am not *drawn* to him." She talked exactly like a grown woman.

"Why ar'n't you drawn to him?" asked Mr. Champe. "He's a nice fellow."

"I know. Aunt Jane likes his kind, but I don't. You see, he's like Cammie *exactly*. He's nice enough on the outside, but it's the inside that's lacking. I could never feel close to him—never. If it wasn't too much trouble I might even hate—"

"You mustn't hate anybody. That's not the way."

"Yes—I know—and I don't *want* to, but with him and Aunt Jane it's an uphill business."

"Your aunt is a very lovely woman."

"Exactly," said Eliza. "She's so stylish she's overstocked with it."

"Eliza, you know what the Bible says about picking the beams out of your own eye?"

"Yes—and I do it whenever I can find one. What I tell *you,* dear, about anybody isn't like I was finding fault. I tell you things the same as myself."

"And I appreciate your confidence, Eliza—I hold it the most sacred thing in the world."

To be thus talking to her was strange when the gulf 'twixt youth and age is considered, but Eliza was not like other children. Miss Jane had found her even more unapproachable than Susan. "She looks right through you," she said in a rather complaining voice to her niece. "I think she is a very

peculiar child, Clarise. If I did anything wrong she would be sure to know it. *You* were never so, nor was Louise."

"I understand her," said Mrs. Dudley, smiling. "And I think she understands me."

"I wish they would love me, Clarise. I came prepared to find them—not half what they are, for you never made me understand what beautiful children they were; but, there's something I yearn for and can't get."

Mrs. Dudley understood and had it in her heart to pity her aunt as never before. "*I* love you," she said softly.

"That's because you are so good. With all my friends and luxuries, I know myself to be a very lonely woman, Clarise."

"I am so sorry," said Mrs. Dudley. "But, what you give will be given you back, Auntie. Maybe you do not give of your real heart."

"Oh, I'm happy enough—only at times," said the aunt, regretting that she had unburdened herself thus—a thing she rarely did. "I have a very optimistic disposition—I'm like a ball. I go way down, then bounce up again."

And the ball was always high up before visitors. When Mr. Welche was present it was quite aloft, and of all the household she was perhaps the youngest. Full of life and mirth, she quite threw her

nieces into the background. Mr. Welche liked her and told her one evening she reminded him of a very dear friend he had once known. "She was exactly like you—no one could have the blues when she was about. Why, I don't believe you ever had a sad moment." He was seated—quite swallowed—in a big Morris chair, and Miss Jane sat near, crocheting some Irish lace. She lost none of his words, though, and paused in her work, gaily patting it before replying.

"You dear man! As if anybody could always be gay. It is only that I keep this side for the world and the other for my private use."

"When those bad headaches come on—you know, like the one you had yesterday," said Susan innocently. "Why, it's then—the other side?"

"Yes—yes," said her aunt. "Mr. Welche, hold out your hands a moment. I want to wind this into a ball."

It was a very homelike scene, Mr. Champe thought, as he entered a few moments later. His broad-smiling presence pervaded the entire room. Both children flew to meet him and were rewarded by a box of candy—his usual accompaniment. Miss Jane threw aside her lace work and came forward, while Mrs. Dudley, toward whom he had barely glanced and that just to make sure of her presence, held her hand out last and he almost forgot to take it for looking into her eyes.

"Well, Welche, there is nobody in the world who comes oftener than you, except myself," he said, taking both children on his lap and holding them there in spite of their mother's remonstrance.

"You don't come near as often as we beg you to," said Eliza. "We begged you to come last night for dinner, and you wouldn't."

"I asked you how much my board bill would be, if you remember," he said, laughing. He got up and stood a minute, his broad back to the blazing fire. "This is the most homelike spot in the whole world. I shall be sorry when summer comes and ends it—actually sorry."

Aunt Jane bit a thread and looked up.

"The worst of it is, Clarise feels that she must go even before summer. There is so much to attend to on a farm—gardens, preserving—everything comes early. I tell Clarise that I can manage very well the month of June without her."

Eliza and Susan looked their consternation. Mrs. Dudley noticed it and said, "Yes, Mrs. Spencer writes that Peter is sick—measles, they think. I feel that spring will put too much on her and it is so kind of Aunt Jane to be willing to take the responsibility of things here until the children's school closes."

Aunt Jane drew her lips together as if to say, "Yes, it is asking a great deal of me," while in

reality she rather enjoyed the thoughts of having the field to herself awhile.

"Don't worry until the time comes," said Mr. Champe, who also had noticed the children's distressed expressions. "Peter's measles will be entirely over by then, and Mrs. Spencer may grow so strong that your mother won't be needed a bit, and can continue her good work in the city."

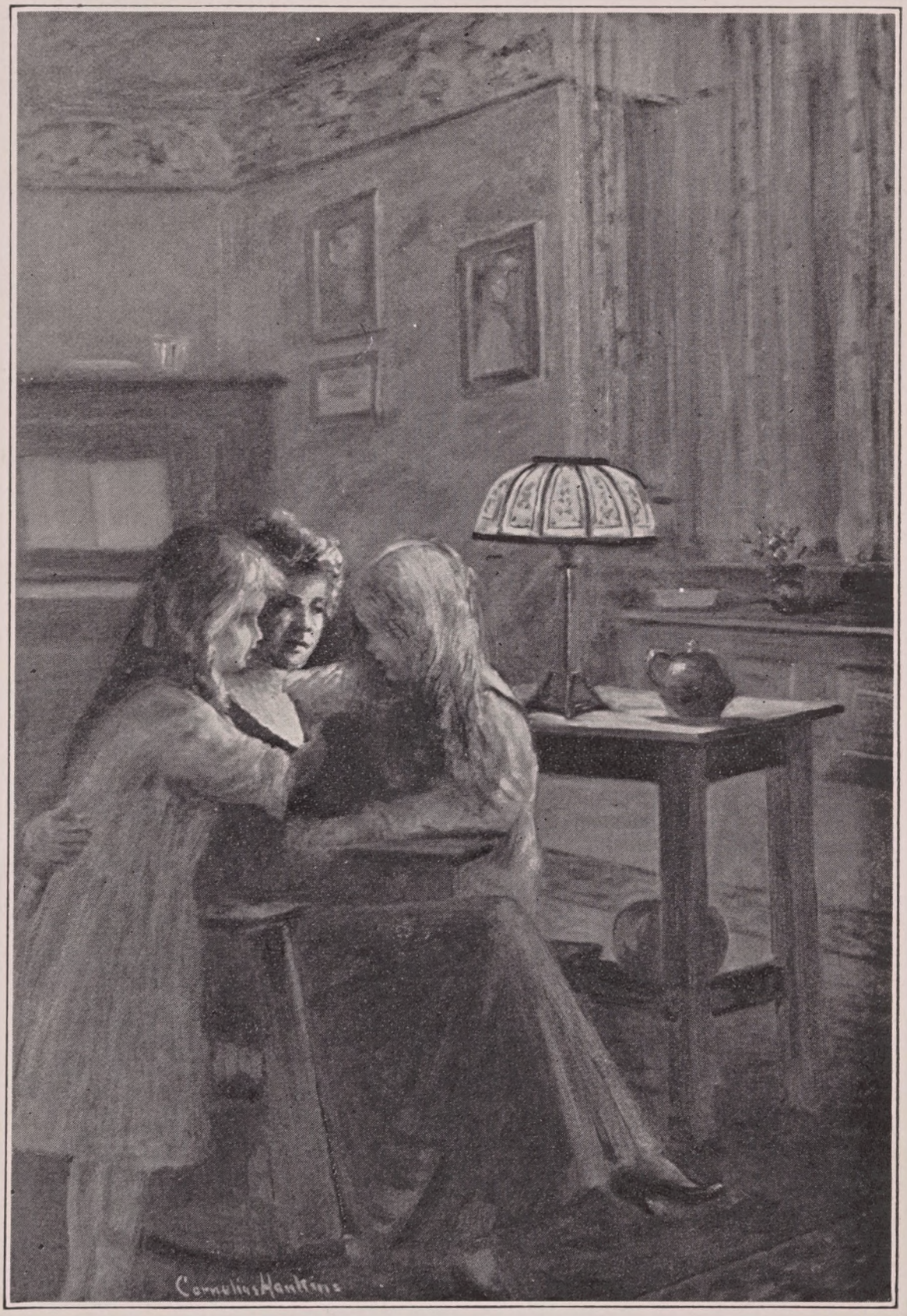
"Yes," said Aunt Jane, "it's ridiculous how Clarise always finds things to do and wears herself completely out for these poorer classes who haven't it in them to appreciate it. I'm very sure *I* wouldn't do it,"—smoothing her lace and patting it some.

During the silence that followed Eliza was wondering and remembering the tears in Maggie's eyes and in the eyes of them all when that last basket of home stuff had been carried there. Wasn't it appreciated? Mrs. Dudley rose and walked to the far end of the room to close a transom. When she came back there was a determined expression on her sweet lips and a fearless look in her beautiful eyes.

"Aunt Jane," she asked, "do you really mean that?"

"Indeed I do! You'll give everything away if you keep on," said the aunt decisively.

"Somebody said,"—Mrs. Dudley's voice was



"THE *IDEA,*" CRIED BOTH GIRLS AT ONCE, CHOKING THEIR MOTHER IN EMBRACES, "SHE DOES NOT — *SHE DOES NOT!*"

very low and very sweet as if arguing with a child—"somebody said that all we ever save is what we give away, and for ten years it has made me happy here"—touching her breast—"to do it. Why shouldn't I be happy, Aunt Jane?"

"Ah, well,"—Aunt Jane had not bargained for this—"I suppose if wearing yourself out and taking from your children—"

"The idea!" cried both girls at once, choking their mother in embraces. "She does not—*she does not!*"

Mr. Welche had listened with an amused smile. He really agreed with Aunt Jane in her ideas, but it amused him to see Mrs. Dudley put on her defense. He couldn't understand her charities, but was rather pleased on the whole that she was like she was. Being a selfish man, unselfishness in others surprised and appealed to him.

Mr. Champe also had listened, but no one could see his face, which was shielded with one hand from the light. Neither could any one tell what he thought. When the children flew to their mother's side, he arose and walked to the fireplace, struck a match and lighted a cigar, handing another one to Mr. Welche; then he went into a corner of the room and drew out a table.

"Let's all play five hundred," he said quietly. "There's nothing that rests me so when I am tired."

CHAPTER XI

THE COUNTRY COUSINS COME A-VISITING

ONE day in April when the buds and blooming honeysuckle called the children out, a speckled thrush (almost tame) lit right at their feet, searching for material for a nest.

"Isn't it too sweet to ever want to die?" asked Eliza, caressing the rich yellow jonquils that bordered the grape-arbor. "I would like to run away and go to the country right now. I know the big haw tree is in its glory and think of the violets we are missing! Let's play something grand this morning—grander than anything yet."

"What shall it be?" asked Susan, Cammie, and Harry, all at once.

"Well, I know lots of things we could do, but we must see first what material we can rake up. Let's go to the attic and ransack that old trunk of Mother's."

"I won't wear another train," said Susan emphatically. "I 'most broke my neck in that last one when I stumbled on it."

"I will wear the train," said Eliza "And, Harry, you can walk along by Susan's side. Cammie can be stage lady."

"You'll ruin Mother's yellow satin," said Susan.

"I shall wear the red-brocaded skirt and those amber beads. I shan't walk. I shall ride my charger," said Eliza so grandly that the others were properly impressed.

They were soon in the attic and had just turned the contents of an old hair trunk out upon the floor when the front door-bell rang and steps were heard racing up the stair. Then the attic steps were climbed by eager feet—two steps at a time.

"Well, if it isn't William," drawled Eliza in Cammie's best style; "and Stella! Come right in. We are fixing to play 'Princess.' "

"Oh, Stella," said Susan, holding her tight and loving her with her eyes.

"We can stay until Monday," said William, fidgeting. "Mr. Johns brought us in his spring wagon. Where's Aunt Clarise?"

"Mother's lying down. She'll be here presently. What's the news?" asked Eliza.

"Nothing 'cept Aunt Lucy nearly got burned up. Digly put her out. She laughed all the time like it was something funny going on."

"Aunt Lucy never was very bright," explained Susan, turning toward Harry and Cammie.

"She's a mighty good goose-picker," said Eliza. "It would not seem right if we didn't find her there when we go. She hasn't got much sense, though.

You remember that time, Susan, when Mother asked her if she had counted the geese and she said she had counted all but two and she couldn't catch those to count them?"

"And the time William fell in the feather barrel?" asked Susan, laughing.

"We brought you some things," said Stella. "There's a salt-rising loaf for Eliza and a pound of butter for you, Susan. We must get it out of our satchels before it softens."

"That was sweet of Aunt Mollie," said Eliza, melting to Stella's charms as of old. She remembered the fine bread her aunt used to make and also the good old times. "Cammie, you and Harry can have a taste. Aunt Mollie is grand at bread-making."

"Let's get out of doors," said William. "I want to see something. Eliza, Mother gave me fifty cents to spend."

"I forgot to introduce you to Cammie and Harry Welche," said Susan, noticing how awkwardly those two were standing aloof. "They're 'special friends of ours."

Cammie gave a graceful bow, thereby making a very favorable impression on William. Harry only stared, his hands rammed deep into his pockets.

"How do you like your new home, Eliza?" asked William. This was the first time they had seen each other since the move to town.

"Well, I love *cities,*" said Eliza, letting her voice linger on the word *cities.* "They are so full of happenings."

"Who's your teacher?"

"Miss Lillian. She's all of our teachers. We are all in the same grade. I love Miss Lillian—she looks—er—interesting. Her hands are white as a lily's."

"*We* go to Cedar Grove school this session. Tom Burge drew his knife on the teacher and was expelled. The teacher is a man and he makes us walk the chalk. I have got five whippings so far and—"

"Let's go play," said Eliza abruptly, feeling a little ashamed for her friends to hear William's confessions. "We were just fixing to play when you-all came. I'm the princess—I'm to wear a long dress out of that trunk. Stella, you can be my lady-in-waiting and Harry my knight. Susan, you are the scullery maid and William can be the village smith. Cammie, you can run ahead to the honeysuckle-spread now and wait till we arrive. We will want you to act. We'll pretend we are going to a London show. Harry, you be catching the pony, for I'll want to ride."

Soon they had all climbed through into the Welches' yard where Harry had the pony waiting. Eliza mounted at once. Harry and William stared

at each other—they had not yet spoken. Eliza saw they would never be very friendly.

"Harry," she said, "you take the reins and lead the pony. Stella, you can either walk by my side or mount behind me. William, you fall back with Susan and follow us at a distance. Cammie, why on earth don't you hurry? You must be there long before we are."

Cammie ran ahead, her brown flowing curls caught with a crimson bow on the side were blown by the wind. William whistled his appreciation and lit off at a rapid pace in her wake.

"Come back!" shouted Eliza. "Knight, overtake the varlet and force him to return."

Harry needed no second bidding. He overtook William and they were locked in each other's arms. A fight followed. It was over in a minute but frightened Susan terribly, while Eliza watched it, smiling sweetly. Soon both boys rose from the ground looking very bedraggled. "Your new suit is ruined, William, and it is such a pity," said Eliza consolingly.

"You sicked him on me," said William, grinning openly at Harry, while Harry looked at him with greater respect than hitherto shown.

"Will you play fair or not?" asked Harry, making a motion as though to renew the fight.

"Oh, I don't mind humoring Eliza in her tom-

foolery. I've got even with her too many times in my life to be afraid I can't this time."

"Fall back in the rear!" shouted Eliza indignantly. "Now then, William, you and Susan pretend to talk secrets of your own behind my back. Now, we'll proceed. Sir Galahad" (to Harry), "where is thy sword?"

"Here," cried Harry, picking up a large stick and brandishing it. "Princess, show me the dragon that molests thee."

"In yonder lagoon methinks I see one. Look, see the angry fire flashing from its eyes. Avaunt! —show thy valor and my hand is thine!"

Harry pranced off in the direction of the fountain, brandishing his stick. An innocent gander flapping his wings and squawking for dear life made a break through the grass and disappeared. Harry returned, wiping imaginary blood from his sword.

"Smithy," cried Eliza, "my horse has lost a shoe. Avaunt! kiss not my scullery maid unbeknownst—slave!"

William, thus addressed, turned a somersault in the air, sprang up, turned another, then knelt and lifted the pony's fore foot, looking at it critically. He got up, laughing, turned a handspring twice and said: "Ladies, I don't like this dawdling. I am going to reach London first," and he was off toward the honeysuckle-spread at the extreme end

of the Welches' big lawn, where Cammie was waiting.

"He's struck on Cammie," said Eliza disgustedly. "William always was mean about playing. Stella, don't you want to ride behind?"

"No, let Susan."

"But she's my scullery maid," objected Eliza.

"Scullery nothing," said Susan. "Get down, selfish; it's my turn."

"Then I'll be scullery maid myself," said Eliza, resignedly. "I must take off my shoes though—all scullery maids go barefooted."

"You'll catch your death of cold," cried Susan. "I'll scream as loud as I can for Mother."

"I can't help it," said Eliza. "I *have* to play my part or I can't be it."

"Then, go ahead and be a princess; but you walk a while like a poor princess. I think I read about one once."

"All right," answered Eliza. "I'll say as I go along, 'Home they brought her warrior, dead!' "

Followed by the others and reciting as she walked, she reached that part of the Welches' yard where the white honeysuckle had spread all over the ground. Cammie arose at once. She had decked herself with the honeysuckles and looked very pretty. Bowing, she asked, "What piece do you want, Eliza?"

"Say the 'Princess,' " answered Eliza, promptly. Cammie struck an attitude and began:

"I, a princess, king descended, 2
Decked with jewels—gilded, dressed,
Would rather be a peasant with a baby at her breast,
For all I look so like the sun—am purple like the West!
Two and two my slaves behind,
Two and two, before,
Two and two, on either hand,
They guard me ever more,
Me, poor dove that must not weep—
Eagle, that cannot soar!"

It was long, so she omitted some of it. Next Eliza arose and sang, "Sweet and low, sweet and low." Eliza rarely sang these days. Some one had said in her presence that a child's voice was like India rubber and wouldn't bear too much stretching, and she had decided to wait patiently until older, so, neither Cammie nor Harry had ever heard her sing before. No wonder Harry listened open-mouthed to this new prima donna. Eliza felt their surprise, but she was far too interested in hearing her voice herself, to think of them. Oh, it was sweet to send it forth—doing it—able to do it! " 'Wind of the Western sea. Breathe and blow, breathe and blow—' " Her body and her arms swayed with the sweet cadence, and she forgot surroundings—everything, in her joy, until she became conscious of another listener. It was Mr.

Welche, going down the walk, who had paused to listen. "Cammie," said Eliza, pausing abruptly, "there goes your father to his bank. Why don't you kiss him good-by?"

"Good-by, Dad," shouted Harry, but, Cammie, shrugging, deigned never a word.

Eliza looked at her, frowning some. "I'll go say good-by to him *myself,*" she declared, picking up her skirts and running across the lawn.

"Good morning," said Mr. Welche, holding out his hand; "I enjoyed your song."

"It was nice," said Eliza. "I came to say good-by."

"Then you must like me, after all," he said in a glad voice that surprised even himself.

"I—er—I can't say I am exactly—*crazy* about you," answered Eliza, trying to be conscientious, "but there are days when—when I can feel a charity toward you. This is one of them," she added, smiling sweetly.

"Why?" asked the surprised Mr. Welche.

"Oh, I don't know. It's because of my warmish heart, I suppose. And then, your eyes look sort of oldish to-day. I seem to like you better when your eyes look oldish, Mr. Welche."

"You curious child!"

"I believe I am—that way," said the imperturbable Eliza.

"Well, good-by, fairy. We won't quarrel, anyway."

Eliza shook hands very gravely.

When she rejoined the others, she found Cammie, who had not paid the least attention to her father, holding her audience spellbound with another recitation. William lay half recumbent, watching her, his freckled face full of honest admiration. Susan and Stella stood listening, arm in arm, while Harry held the pony by its mane and watched Eliza's approach. Eliza pressed her flushed face against the pony's face and stroked his tangled mane. Harry shouted, "Get away, Cammie; we want to hear Eliza sing again."

"I can't," declared Eliza. "I'm worried."

"What about?"

"I don't know exactly, but I must go off by myself until I'm over my distressfulness." So saying, she disappeared, running into her yard as fast as she could.

"What could have happened?" asked Harry.

"It's a fine way to treat your company, I must say," Cammie remarked, shrugging her shoulders and glancing toward William.

"Hush up," said Harry, who felt worse than any of them.

"She always was a crazy thing," declared William. "But we can play *without* her, I suppose."

Yet, though the play progressed, they all felt her absence and everything dragged.

"It's not a bit of use to beg her to come," said Susan. "We'll have to just wait until the spirit moves her."

Although they waited an hour, Eliza did not reappear. When they entered the house, they found her practicing on the piano.

"What on earth—" began Susan who knew Saturday was not practicing day.

"I hate it like fury," said Eliza, "but I am trying to forget something, and I like to work when I'm trying to forget."

Stella and William went upstairs to their aunt and Susan pressed Eliza for an explanation. She replied that she was worried because she believed Cammie to be the coldest-hearted daughter in the whole world.

"Yet," said Susan, "you'll be eating her up tomorrow."

"I know it. It is my one weakness, Susan."

"You are a perfect goose, Eliza. Do come on and play with us. I feel sorry for Stella and William."

"All right. Let's take them to the historical society and show them the mummy. I want to watch William's expression when he sees it."

Once while they were dressing, Eliza paused to

remark, "If Cammie had been a child exactly like me, Mr. Welche would have been far happier."

"You are so conceited, Eliza," said Susan. "Why don't you say like Stella or like me?"

"Because I would have suited him much better," answered Eliza, smiling sweetly. "Susan, I am *fine*. You don't seem to know how fine I am. Sometimes I want to divide myself into little pieces and give a piece to everybody in the world—to give them joy."

CHAPTER XII

AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS

IT was after four o'clock before they got started. Harry and Cammie joined them at the gate and they paired off. Harry and Eliza walked together, Cammie and William, Susan and Stella.

There was so much to see and so many places to point out to the two cousins that it took them about an hour to reach the historical society rooms when it should have taken fifteen minutes. They went a block out of their way so as to pass the public school building, where they lingered a while. William expressed his approval enthusiastically. "Gee! Ain't it *big,* though? I wish Tom Burch could see it. I say, Harry, it must have cost upwards of a thousand dollars to build it." When they reached Mr. Champe's office they all had to run up and tell him where they were going. Then, Cammie pointed out her father's bank and, although they did not go in, William was seriously impressed by its exterior.

The sun seemed rather low in the heavens when they finally reached the gloomy door that led to the

historical building. William whistled, trying to cheer himself. "I don't see why Eliza is bringing us here," he said, feeling a sudden shrinkage in his previous desire to see the mummy.

Eliza paused in the doorway, turned her head a little on one side, and looked at William reflectively. To her, this was the most wonderful place in town and she wanted to impress them with its wonders.

"You know, William," she said sweetly, "you wouldn't want to go back without seeing the first paper that was ever printed in America, and the sword that George Washington used on the British, and the dress that Pocahontas wore when she saved John Smith's life, and—"

"Let's go in," interrupted Stella eagerly, pushing ahead.

In an alcove that led off the hall sat the caretaker, Mr. Booker. Eliza had met him before, so she walked right up, extending her hand: "How do you do, Mr. Booker. I want to show my cousins your mummy."

"Go right in," said the old man, barely glancing up from his desk. Around him in every space there were white marble statues and busts of various renowned and unrenowned personages. William looked scandalized. "They don't seem hardly proper without clothes," he whispered to Eliza. "What are they for anyway?"

"Artist's statues," said Eliza. "They're considered nice to copy."

"Mrs. Granger in the country is an artist and she don't look like those things," said William uncomprehensively.

The hall kept growing darker and darker until they reached the big chamber where the relics were kept. In that room many dark slate-colored columns reached up to the ceiling. Long glass cases full of relics ran parallel with one another and across the length of the room. There seemed to be about twenty of them. The windows, tall and narrow, were dim from city smoke so that the whole room was gloomy and dark.

Eliza, followed by the others, pushed her way at once to the center of the room where the mummy's case stood. There she paused while the other five children surrounded the case and peered into it. A well-preserved mummy met their gaze.

"That's it," announced Eliza in a stage whisper. "It is a woman eighteen years old and she was mummified one thousand years before Christ. If it wasn't so dark we could read about her. William, look at her *finger nails!*"

Nobody uttered a word. All looked solemnly down upon the body of the Egyptian. Eliza felt elated over the impression produced.

"I once heard of a man," she continued, "who

found a mummy in the tombs of Egypt"—she paused, dropped her voice as befitted the occasion—"this mummy the man found was the mummy of an *Egyptian Princess.* It was so perfect that he could even tell the color of her eyebrows. She was so beautiful that he fell deep in love with her and took her back to England when he went. There in his castle he had a room built expressly for her and he stood the case with her in it right up in that room, and every day he went and gazed on her and loved her to distraction. He was a lord and his old father the earl had set his heart on his son's marrying a certain noble young lady, but the son would not hear to it. He wouldn't even go to see the lady, for he was so in love with his beautiful mummy.

"One night after he had come from the room where the Egyptian Princess mummy stood, he fell asleep on the couch with his clothes on and had a dream. He thought the mummy stepped down out of its case and kissed him, then began dancing the most graceful dance, throwing her draperies over her head and bowing. She was so fascinating that he reached out his arms, which awoke him. His father was standing over him and right behind his father stood the lady he had seen in his dreams (only not dressed the same). He sprang up and fell at her feet in a swoon. When he came to him-

self he begged to marry her right away and, as she was the very lady his father had picked out for him, they were married. The strangest part of it was, when he went to look into the mummy's case it was empty except for a slip of paper on which was written, 'I go to return to the land of my fathers.' I never look at this mummy but what I wish I knew exactly what she *had been*—if she was a princess—what—"

The last word was scarcely out of Eliza's mouth when a loud crash came. It seemed to be right at them, and they bolted. They fled to the corner of the room farthest from the door. Eliza led, Stella and Susan, with Harry between them, came next, and William, with Cammie swinging on to his coat, followed. Cammie kept crying, "Wait, William, wait—please do," but William lost no time. He stumbled once and fell with Cammie on top, but they both wriggled up without a moment's delay. All of them at last came to a stop when they butted against the far wall and against each other, breathless and completely panic-stricken.

"What on earth was it?" they asked.

"I wouldn't pass that mummy's case again for a million dollars," said William, shaking his head.

"We'll have to stay here all night," said Susan, shivering until her teeth chattered.

"It was all Eliza's fault, telling us that ghost

tale," said William, but Harry punched him in the ribs and made him hush.

"I believe," sobbed Cammie, "that it was the mummy that made that noise."

"I could 'most declare I saw it move a little," said Stella, wishing she had never left her country home.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if it should rise and dance for us?" asked Eliza, who was enjoying the situation in spite of her fears. "I have heard that they do strange things if you will believe in them."

"We don't want to believe in them. We wish we didn't," whispered the other three girls, hugging each other without knowing it.

"We could all catch hold of hands and run out as fast as we could," suggested Eliza.

"Never!" They all spoke at once.

"Harry could go first," said Eliza. "He is my brave knight and—"

"I *won't* go first," said Harry firmly. "You needn't to *ask* it, Eliza."

"You could pretend like you had a *sword,* Harry."

"Pretend nothing! I'd be snatched through the ceiling and borne to Egypt in less than a second."

"Well, there's no use asking *William* to," said Eliza hopelessly. "We might as well decide to spend the night."

"No, there ain't no use," said William. "I never come here to be *murdered,* Eliza."

"Oh—oh!" wailed Cammie in a low voice, clutching at William's coat, whereupon he freed himself immediately. They were now almost under one of the cases and were crowding terribly.

"These cases are about as bad to sleep close to as the mummy," whispered Eliza. "They are full of dead people's things." All of them shifted their positions at once to the farthest wall.

"I'd rather be fighting in a battle than be here," said William desperately. "I'm plumb crazy 'most."

"Maybe the caretaker will come in before he leaves for the night," suggested Harry.

"He's already gone. It's as dark as Egypt outdoors," said Eliza, pointing toward the high windows that had ceased to admit even a ray of light.

"Locked in with these," was the horrible thought that assailed each child. With one impulse they covered their faces to await the dawn.

The cause of it all was this: Old Mr. Booker, who was very deaf, had taken forty winks (which lasted nearly an hour). He awoke with a jump that made him overturn the stand which held the Webster's Unabridged Dictionary. It fell with the crash which had frightened the children half out of their wits. Mr. Booker saw it was closing time, so he got his hat and departed. At the outer door he met Mr. Champe, who asked if the children had

yet started for home. For the first time, Mr. Booker remembered the children, but, not liking to confess to his nap, he said:

"Why, yes, I know they left some time ago."

"Very well," said Mr. Champe, turning away; "they telephoned me at my office that they hadn't reached home yet, but, probably they are there by now."

As Mr. Booker continued down the street to his home a block distant, he said to himself, "The children must have gone while I slept. I hope they won't mention my sleeping—I have held the position so long now, and the board might think—" Just then, he reached his own door and entered the house. Ten minutes later the 'phone rang—it was Mr. Champe on the line.

"Hello, Mr. Booker, would you mind meeting me again at the historical building? Or, if you'd rather, I will call for the key. The children haven't gone home yet, and their mother thinks it just possible that they may be locked in there."

As soon as they were together, Mr. Booker acknowledged to his nap and Mr. Champe said, "I suspected it, but it will go no further. I don't see why you shouldn't doze occasionally if you like."

"I don't believe the children are here, though," said Mr. Booker as he turned the key in the lock. "Why should they want to stay so long?"

"There is no telling," said Mr. Champe. "I am just beginning to learn something about them myself. I bet anything, though, that we will find them here."

When the children heard approaching footsteps, they thought the worst was about to happen and let forth a yell that even old Mr. Booker pronounced deafening. After some minutes, however, Mr. Champe succeeded in convincing them that he was no ghost and got them to their feet. As they passed the mummy's case they crowded, pushing Mr. Booker right against it. He looked surprised, for he had lived with that mummy too long to be afraid of it.

CHAPTER XIII

WILLIAM DECIDES IN FAVOR OF METHODISM

THERE was some discussion among themselves as to which church they should attend next morning, but they finally decided for Trinity, the largest Episcopal church in town and one which none of them had ever attended.

They paired off as before. Susan and Eliza wore their new checked silks and felt very fine, Cammie was a picture in her blue linen and hat to match, while Stella wore a dress of snowy freshness. William's suit had been brushed until it looked new, and Harry felt quite at peace with himself in his Sunday serge as he walked by Eliza's side.

The Sunday school was just being dismissed as they reached the church, and they naturally went in—the door out of which the children were pouring. This was not the door that led into the main body of the church at all, but into a chapel and Sunday school rooms. With many twists and turns the children became bewildered. Eliza led, not knowing at all where she was leading, but finally, as luck would have it, they stopped short in front of a very tall man who proved to be the min-

ister. Seeing they were strangers and lost, he kindly patted Eliza on the head and asked what they wanted. She told him they were hunting for the right part of the church. Then he turned to a man who stood near and said,

"Mr. Wright, take these children to my pew."

"Thank you, sir," said Eliza, smiling sweetly. And, long after they were seated, Eliza kept thinking of his kindness and feeling very grateful about it.

When the choir entered, William, who had never been in a large Episcopal church before, was much impressed. "Eliza," he whispered, "they look like angels."

"It's a vested choir," answered Eliza.

"Where?" asked William uncomprehensibly.

"The choir," said Eliza. "You rise and sit like I do," and she opened her prayer book. She never fully forgave William for his part in what followed.

They were all kneeling, and William, who found so much praying a little tiresome, began fingering his pocket knife. Accidentally, the knife fell from his hand and rolled away under the pew in front. It was too distant to reach with his hand, so he pushed his foot far under to rake it out. Eliza saw it but the other children did not. Just as the minister said, "We humbly beseech Thee for all sorts and conditions of men," she saw William screwing

his foot and realized that it was caught. Then, she *laughed aloud!*

Her mortification the minute she did it, knew no bounds. She also became aware that she was going to laugh again as sure as she looked at William's foot, and she knew no power in her command could possibly stay her eyes from that direction. It was this losing control of herself that made her angry. She pinched her arm until the pain became excruciating, and all to no avail. It almost seemed as if there had been a pause in the minister's prayers when she had laughed. It was awful, after his kindness, for her to act thus!

"Eliza," whispered William desperately, after trying for what seemed an age to get his foot loose, "what am I going to do when they get up? I'm fastened."

"Take off your shoe," she whispered, not daring to look in his direction. But, when she heard him stoop to do her bidding, she *had* to look. He was in a most peculiar strain, trying to take off his shoe and at the same time hide his predicament from Cammie. Eliza exploded again!

William managed somehow to slip his foot from the shoe in time to stand with the others. Eliza found it was no use trying to control herself, for every time she glanced at William's stockinged foot, she became hysterical. Mortified as never before,

her face crimson with shame, she managed to stand during the singing.

As for William, a more miserable looking boy could not have been found. Bereft of both his knife and shoe, his disgust knew no bounds. As the singing proceeded he threw back his head resignedly and listened, but when the minister entered the pulpit to begin the sermon it was too much.

"Is he jest beginnin' to preach?" he asked Eliza.

"Yes," she whispered.

"I'm wore out now, standin' and kneelin' so much. Let's go."

"Can't," whispered Eliza. "Do hush."

After about an hour, the choir arose again and William thought it was all to do over.

"I never was so tired of preaching," he whispered, standing on one foot and trying to hide the other one from Cammie. After service he had resolved on letting the others pass out first so he could get his shoe without being noticed.

"Get out," said Susan a few minutes later; "get out and let us pass—it's over."

"Go on," he said, flattening himself as much as possible, "I have to stay and get my knife; it's under the seat."

The minister stood at the church door shaking hands. Eliza hoped there might be an opportunity

for explaining to him, but the people crowded so that she merely touched his hand. "What must he think of me?" was her woeful reflection.

On the way home William declared he was never going to be an Episcopalian. "Good old Methodism for mine," he said. "I don't like so much exercise in church. I like to set."

"It don't matter *what* church you belong to, William," said Susan. "Only, I feel religious-er in my own church, 'cause I'm used to it, I guess."

"It's a right grand old church, Susan," said Harry. "Eliza, what *was* the matter with *you?*"

"I behaved awful," said poor Eliza, whose conscience pricked worse than ever. "It was all William's fault. I never did hate myself before. It was like being a different person. I *hate* to hate *myself.* I pinched my arm so it hurts yet and that's not all. I am not going to eat my ice cream for dinner as a punishment."

"What did William do?" asked Cammie.

"Nothing," said William promptly, beseeching Eliza with his eyes not to tell.

"Very well," said Eliza, who was too miserable to talk anyway, "if you don't want her to know, I won't tell. It won't do *me* any good now anyway. I hate like fury to think about it all and what that polite minister must have thought of *me.*"

"Why aren't you eating your dessert, Eliza?" asked her mother at dinner table. "And you don't look like yourself, dearie—what is it?"

"I'm punishing myself for something," said Eliza.

"Would you mind telling me what for?" she asked, smiling.

"For laughing in church, Mother. And going without my ice cream isn't all I intend doing. I haven't decided yet what else, but it will be worse than this."

"I never knew you to laugh in church. Why did you?"

Eliza then told everything. When she finished, everybody was amused except herself.

"It was awful in me," she declared. "I've already pinched my arm black and blue on account of it."

"Show me the place," said Mother.

Eliza lifted her sleeve. There were two bad bruises between her wrist and elbow.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Stella and Susan in one breath.

"That was very foolish, Eliza," said Mrs. Dudley. "Why don't you try to make amends?"

"How can I?"

"Why, wait until to-morrow and then go to Mr. Morgan and tell him all about it. He was a child

once and will understand. I can't have you bruise yourself that way—it's silly."

"Do you care if I eat nothing but a piece of cold cornbread for my supper?" asked Eliza, determined to inflict to the fullest.

"Well—no. Cornbread is good wholesome food, and denying yourself is good."

The next day Eliza, true to her resolutions, made her way to Mr. Morgan's study. That it was a hard thing for her to do was evinced by the many times she halfway turned back and then pushed straight on, her lips pressed tight.

"Yes—Dr. Morgan was in his study—would she come in."

The minister looked up from his papers, and when he saw his visitor was a little girl, his eyes became very kind and fatherly.

"Won't you sit down, my dear," he said, not recognizing her in the least, for which Eliza felt thankful.

"No, sir. I wanted to make amends."

"Oh—you do. What is it all about, dear?"

"I laughed in church yesterday. I didn't mean to. William, my cousin, got his foot caught and it was his wiggling it that got me in such a laughing way. You had been so kind—letting us sit in your pew, and I was so ashamed I didn't know what to do."

"Ah—I see! So you were the well-dressed little girl who lost your way in a strange church? I was very happy to tender my pew to you and your nice little friends."

Eliza looked startled, but the minister innocently continued:

"And how are your little friends to-day? You all impressed me very favorably—such well-cared-for children."

"I must go," said Eliza in a colorless voice.

"But what is it? What have I said to offend you?" asked the minister, puzzled.

Eliza went up to his desk and leaned over it. Her eyes were very intent—her face white.

"Mr. Morgan," she said "I want you to tell me, if we—if we had been dressed in poor red calico dresses like Maggie at school and if our hair had been tied with frayed ribbons and—everything else to match, would you—would you have asked us to sit in your pew?" Her voice was unsteady, but her eyes looked searchingly into his. "Would you, sir?" she insisted eagerly.

Mr. Morgan saw it was a vital moment with the child, and knew much depended on the answer he gave. He took her hand and said earnestly, "I believe—I am *sure,* dearie, that I would have done it much quicker even than I did, but no little girls in red calico dresses ever come to my church. I wish they did."

"Oh, I'm glad. I'm glad of it, sir. I'm so glad I could—I could just—just *bless* you, Mr Morgan."

With these words she turned and left the room.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MEETING OF THE CLUB

MRS. DUDLEY went to the country about the middle of May. She wrote back about how she had arrived just in time for the cherries, and about the blossoming trees and new happenings that made the children hungry to go.

"I can hear the crickets cricketing and the katydids katydiding from the tall trees right now," Eliza confided to Mr. Champe as she sat on his lap on the porch one evening, hugging tight a white poodle, his latest gift. "I just wish I could run now—this very minute—barefooted in the tickling blue-grass and put my lips to the holes that the peckerwoods made in the sugar maples and suck out the sugar water."

"You little idealist," said Mr. Champe, kissing her.

"Eliza talks curious," said Susan, who had approached in time to hear the last remark. "She knows we could not go barefooted yet, and the maples are not ready to suck."

"Oh, yes they are," declared Eliza. "I know they are, for I can feel it in my bones."

"There's Aunt Jane calling us to go to bed," said Susan, rising.

"Aunt Jane fiddlesticks," said Eliza, rising also as the aunt appeared at the front door.

"Come, dearies—like good girlies. They've been splendid, so far, Mr. Champe. I couldn't ask any better."

Mr. Champe took his cigar from his lips and knocked the ashes from it. "They're fine," he said, kissing them both.

"Yes, I'm good," said Eliza, "but Susan's splendid."

"How queer to acknowledge one's own goodness," said Aunt Jane.

"They're honest. I like to listen to them. They are as refreshing as a spring shower," declared Mr. Champe.

They had hated very much to have their mother leave, but, after she had talked it over with them many times, they had become somewhat reconciled. What they disliked most was having to stay with Aunt Jane, but, as Eliza had stoutly said, "We can stand a month with anybody, even if it is a dragon," not at all meaning to be uncomplimentary.

The night after Mrs. Dudley's departure, the club met with Mrs. Edwards, and Harry and another boy were to take Eliza and Susan. Mrs. Dudley had forgotten to mention this to Aunt Jane,

who had hitherto failed to notice their habit of going with little boys. When they opened the front door to admit their guests, the aunt was plainly scandalized. "What!" she exclaimed, "going with boys at your ages? It is ridiculous!"

"We're used to it," replied Eliza grandly. "Good night, Aunt Jane. We'll be back before ten."

"You have no wrap on. Here, take my lace scarf."

"I don't want to," said Eliza, fearing she might injure it.

"You shall not go without," said the aunt, determinedly wrapping it around Eliza's shoulders.

"Oh, very well," said Eliza. "It isn't warm a bit though. Just lace and stuff."

"I feel better for your wearing it, precious. Kiss me, both of you. Here, I want to kiss your eyes, my beautifuls."

They submitted.

When the children reached Mrs. Edwards', the meeting had begun. As they entered the room, the president rapped on the little table in front of him for order.

"Mr. Secretary, will you read the minutes of the last meeting?" he said impressively.

Ethel Morrison arose, cleared her throat, and began in a monotonous tone: "The Excelsior Club

met with Mrs. Child, April 16th, when minutes of the last meeting were read and one new member admitted. The treasurer handed in her report. Ways and means were discussed by which the Club could give a charity benefit play in the Welches' yard this summer, but the idea was given up on account of so many absentees from the club in the summer time. A motion was then made to disband in June and reorganize again in the fall. Motion was accepted. The club paper was read by Miss Cammie Welche. The main feature of the paper was a story by the assistant editor. Mr. Harry Welche contributed an editorial on 'Why the Earth is Round'; but, although well written, it was a little chestnutty because all the fifth grades had studied it for some time before." (Harry could be heard clearing his throat, while others tittered.) "Games were then played," continued the secretary, "and refreshments served. The meeting adjourned to meet next time with Mrs. Edwards."

The secretary took her seat amidst loud applause. The president arose. He ran his eye calmly down a tablet and proceeded to call the roll, after which he asked for the treasurer's report.

Lottie Damon arose. She wore glasses through which her pretty black eyes sparkled; her cheeks were crimson from embarrassment; her voice low:

"The fines for absent members this year have

amounted to one dollar and thirty-seven cents. Most of it is still due. There are three dollars and three cents in the treasury, including fees and everything."

"The paper will now be read by Miss Cammie Welche," announced the president. Cammie arose and bowed.

"The paper is short this week on account of the editor's being sick the first part of the week. There's a short story by the assistant editor."

Eliza arose, smiling sweetly. "This," she said impressively, "is different from anything I ever wrote. It is called, 'The Child, the Garden and the Wall.'

"Once there was a little girl named Wynne. She climbed a huge WALL. It was the ordinary kind of stone wall except taller and she didn't know what was on the other side until she got over. She found the loveliest and most wonderful flower garden she had even seen. Imagine how delighted she was—and how she ran about everywhere, breaking off the flowers and not caring in the least that they did not belong to her. That night she would not climb over the wall for fear of losing the garden and not being able to find it any more.

"The next day she ran about the same way, taking all she could—although she did stop once or twice and glance toward the wall, thinking she ought to

leave what was not hers. But she hadn't the strength, so that night she again REMAINED INSIDE THE WALL. The third day everything was sweeter than ever and she wandered farther and farther away from the wall, gathering more and more of the flowers. Finally she arrived at that part of the garden where the WISHING VINE GREW. There, at high noon, she fell asleep. A most beautiful Fairy came and stood over her. The Fairy said, 'Wynne, little girl, don't you want to make a truly wish?'

" 'What is a truly wish?' asked Wynne rubbing her eyes.

" 'A truly wish,' replied the Fairy, 'is the very best wish you can think of and it will be sure to come true.'

" 'How must I go about it?' asked Wynne, interested.

" 'You must take a leaf off the WISHING VINE and rub it. Then, you shut your eyes and walk backwards as hard as you can go all the time, saying what you wish—but remember, let it be something good.'

" 'Well,' said Wynne, thinking hard, 'I wish I had the strength to leave this beautiful garden—because it isn't mine and I've no right to pull the flowers—I wish I could leave it—I wish I could leave it—I wish I could leave it.' She kept going backwards and kept rubbing the leaf she had

pulled as the Fairy had told her to do. Finally, when she awoke, she was outside the wall.

"Now, here comes the prettiest part of it all. Because she had wished an honest wish and had tried to do it, the Fairy waved her wand and made her owner of the whole garden forever and ever."

Eliza sat down, smiling sweetly. The clapping was tremendous.

"It is not so good as your last one, Eliza," said one girl.

"I like it," returned Eliza composedly. "It is by far the best thing I ever wrote."

"What made you think of it?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"Oh, it was so hard for me to do something one day—and this story popped into my head all in a minute. I wish there were fairies nowadays—and I wish grand things could happen to us."

"Let's play," suggested some of the boys.

Games began. There was "Clap In and Clap Out," "King William," "In Some Lady's New Brick House," and "Handkerchief." Afterward, they were all ushered into the dining-room, where ice cream and cake and other good things awaited them.

On the way home Eliza confided to Harry that she never would like kissing games. "It made me mad when Herburt Sneed tried to kiss me," she

said. "I don't see why you-all don't cut out that kind of game."

"The girls like them better than the boys," said Harry.

"I don't believe a single girl likes them," declared Eliza stoutly. "I would be ashamed to say a thing like that, Harry Welche."

"Oh, they pretend they don't," said Harry, nodding, "but I don't put much faith in that. Cammie says once a girl told her that she liked the boys best who insisted on kissing her."

"Well, I don't. I'd hate a boy who would do that. I'd *hate* and *despise* him."

"Maybe it's because you are not used to it," said Harry. "I never went to a party that they didn't play 'King William,' and it is always very popular."

"In the country," said Eliza, "we often play games, but I never saw a kissing one played until I came to town. When you and Cammie come to see us this summer we will show you how *we* play," she added, feeling proud as never before of her country origin.

"We are all *children,*" said Harry. "It seems to me the best way to do is just hold up your mouth and kiss. Annie Mitchel always does that and I think it looks nice."

"She's the youngest girl in the crowd," said Eliza.

"That might be the reason," said Harry. "Anyway, I don't believe *you* pretend anything, Eliza. I wouldn't try to kiss you because I'd be afraid you would never like me again."

"It would not hurt to *try,* Harry. They might think you didn't *want* to kiss me, you know."

"All right then," said Harry. "The next time they pick me out for you I will. Maybe if you would practice a little—"

"I may practice on William this summer—as he's my cousin," said Eliza, who did not want to seem an oddity.

"I'll lick him if you do," said Harry so fiercely that Eliza hushed.

"There!" she exclaimed, stopping abruptly, "if I haven't gone and left Aunt Jane's shawl at Mrs. Edwards'. Now, what *shall* I do!"

"I believe you had it when we started," said Harry. "Let's walk back a little way and see if you haven't dropped it."

"I see it up yonder in the street," said Eliza, hastening. Harry followed and when she stooped to pick up the shawl he stooped also, saying, "Let me get it for you, Eliza." When they arose their hands were covered with a black sticky something that they began to wipe off on their clothes. "What on earth—" began Eliza.

"It's tar," said Harry. "I saw the men working

here to-day and they must have spilled a puddle of it. It looked like a black scarf."

"My dress is completely ruined, and my hands as black as ever," said Eliza. "What *will* Aunt Jane think?"

"I guess she'll scold some," said Harry. "I've ruined my suit too, but there's nobody at home who will take the trouble to care. A new one is so easy to get and our housekeeper, Mrs. Mathews, don't pay us much attention. Father is always too busy. Sometimes I pine for a *real mother,* Eliza."

"Never mind," said Eliza, touching his arm in sympathy. "When you and Cammie come to the country this summer I'll divide mine with you. You've got a lovely *sister*—that's something."

"Cammie's cold-blooded," said Harry. "But I *am* proud of her beauty."

"Yes, indeed," said Eliza. "It isn't everybody that can look at a pretty face like that all day."

"Here we are," said he, helping her up the steps. "I guess Susan got here way ahead of us."

"Will you come in?" asked Eliza politely, knowing what the answer would be.

"No, thanks. I must be going."

Aunt Jane opened the door. "What is that on your dress?"

"It's tar," said Eliza grimly. "I hoped you'd be asleep."

"What do you mean? How did you do it? I am perfectly shocked at you."

"I was trying to find your scarf," said Eliza.

"What!"

"Your lace scarf I lost." Aunt Jane's expression was beyond description.

"My dearest possession," she exclaimed, sinking into the nearest chair.

"It may not be lost for good," ventured Eliza. "It may still be at Mrs. Edwards'."

"Go to bed!" commanded Aunt Jane. "My nerves are in a stew."

Eliza said her prayers very earnestly that night: "Dear God, bless us all. And please, God, don't let me hate Aunt Jane—as I am so afraid I might do if You don't use Your influence with me to keep me from it. And one other thing, God; don't let me hate boy-kissing if it is the proper thing to like it. Amen."

"Susan," she whispered long after they were supposed to be asleep, "I've been trying to imagine Aunt Jane different for hours, but it makes me tired. I never was in a fix before where I couldn't imagine what I wanted to."

"Let's imagine Mother is here," said Susan practically.

"No—no. I'm obliged to get Aunt Jane to suit me first. If my imagination won't work, I'm gone up, for I couldn't bear her as she is."

"She is not very—er—prepossessing," murmured Susan sleepily.

"But, I think I'll get her fixed directly," said Eliza hopefully, turning her face to the wall.

CHAPTER XV

CAMMIE AND HARRY IN TROUBLE

PERHAPS if the last days of school had not been filled so completely with studying for examinations, Aunt Jane's nerves would have received more shocks than they did, but a glimpse into her diary will show she was not altogether free in this respect:

"This is a lovely city—and the people are almost —*not quite* but *almost*—like my dear friends at home. I really have *enjoyed* my stay *very much.* The little girls are *interesting,* and if I were an *onlooker* and not *in charge* I should enjoy them *immensely.* They have not been brought up as *I* have been *accustomed* to seeing children brought up, for poor Clarise has treated them with a sort of *confidence* one would accord a grown person. Another thing, they do not show the intense *affection* I like and it is a great *disappointment* to one of my *warm* nature, however, although one never knows what to expect of them; as far as *real principles* go, they are not lacking. This is a very *lovely house.* I almost wish we could spend the summer here. Last week I heard it was for sale with all the furnishings,

and I thought I might venture to buy it—not a bad investment even though I didn't choose to live in it *all* the time—but when I reached the real estate office he said it had just been bought by Mr. Howell Champe. What a *pity* I did not arrive sooner—"

. . . . . .

One Sunday morning as Miss Jane sat over her coffee Johnson brought the morning paper and laid it beside her plate.

"Why, what's this!" she exclaimed. "THE FOURTH NATIONAL BANK'S REPORTED FAILURE. MR. WELCHE'S ABSENCE FROM TOWN CAUSES ALARM. A RUN ON BANK EXPECTED."

"Mr. Welche?" exclaimed Eliza and Susan, pushing forward. "That must be *our* Mr. Welche."

Just then Mr. Champe was announced and brought straight into the dining-room. "Ah, I see you have been reading about the bank. I am not worried. I could stake my life on Welche," he said.

"Have you any money there?" asked Miss Jane.

"More than I'd care to lose," he answered, smiling.

"Is it a failure?" asked Eliza, thinking of her friends next door.

"No—no. Just a sensation that will blow over. I came to say that I am going to a place not far from Glenraven to-day and will call there before I return. Is there any message?"

Eliza and Susan looked eager. He had taken them out the last Sunday and they were in hopes—

"No—I can't to-day," he said decidedly. "I first have to go about fifteen miles north of there—and it would be a tiresome trip for you."

"Give our love to Mother—and tell her it's just one more little week."

"She knows that," he said, smiling. "I expect she even knows the minutes."

"It's time to dress for Sunday school," announced Aunt Jane as soon as breakfast was over. She rose briskly and motioned Eliza and Susan to follow.

"I wonder if Cammie and Harry are worried," said Eliza. "I don't feel like going to Sunday school with my friends in trouble."

"Neither do I," declared Susan. "I want to go over there."

"They haven't any mother—nobody 'cept just that housekeeper and I think we ought to go comfort them. There's no telling how miserable they are," said Eliza, watching Aunt Jane to see how she was impressed.

"Well, you won't go *now*," declared the aunt, whose affection for the Welche family had diminished considerably in the last few minutes. "You shall go to Sunday school as usual and stay to church afterwards. Now march and dress."

"I hate Aunt Jane—I can't seem to help it," whispered Eliza, as she and Susan climbed the stairs.

Susan said nothing, but purposely took a long time making her toilet. "I want to be late," she explained to Eliza.

"So do I," answered Eliza. "But I have to dress quickly. I never could dawdle over anything even for my own benefit. I'll tell you what let's do—and I believe it will be right. Let's go over there instead of to Sunday school. We don't have to ever let Aunt Jane know, and it is our solemn duty to comfort our friends in trouble."

"All right," said Susan. "For once I believe we ought to deceive Aunt Jane."

When Miss Jane, handsomely attired, walked into church and took the accustomed pew, she gave a covert glance around, searching for her nieces, but did not see them. "They must still be in the Sunday school room," she thought, opening her prayer book. As they did not appear even after service began, she concluded they were sitting with friends further back in the church and determined to admonish them for such behavior. After service, she met some friends of her own who made her entirely forget about the girls, and it was not until dinner was nearly over that she remembered to ask them where they had sat.

"We never went at all," said Eliza. "We went to the Welches'."

The bomb exploded!

After a long lecture they were sent to bed, where they were told to reflect on their sins. If Aunt Jane felt any compunction about punishing them, she was far from showing it, for her mouth was drawn down tight as if to say, "I'm determined you shall feel the consequences of your actions."

But, reflecting on their sins was not the way in which Susan and Eliza spent the time. They were thinking again of their visit to their friends and were wondering and planning ways and means by which they might comfort and help them.

When the Welches' front door had been opened to admit them, Eliza had been shocked by Cammie's appearance. Her eyes were very red from crying and her nose was pink. Even her dress looked bedraggled as if she had worn it a month. Harry bore up better, because, as he explained, he was not thinking so much about how they might be obliged to live in a humble cottage—such as haunted Cammie's dreams, as he was worrying over his father and trying to solve what had become of him. "I never knew how much I thought of dear old dad before," he said. "We haven't seen him for two days and a reporter has been here asking me all sorts of questions which I had to answer although I felt like I was probably doing him harm by it."

"I am mad with Father," said Cammie cruelly. "Here I have to come out in society with not a red cent to my back." She began to sob, but Eliza looked at her a little scornfully, for she couldn't admire her words.

"Father has done nothing wrong," said Harry sternly. "I could swear that he will make good if they will give him time."

"Banks have failed before," sobbed Cammie, "and it always turns out awful. I haven't much hope."

"You and Harry could come and live with us," said Eliza, feeling for a ray of hope and finding it.

"I'd never go anywhere looking like a ragamuffin. I'd rather bury myself in the beginning," said Cammie.

"You couldn't *look* ugly," said Eliza, "and you could imagine a calico dress was a silk one and you could be a princess in disguise, Cammie—a noble princess to whom wonderful things could happen nearly every day and—"

"Hush," sobbed Cammie. "It's just like telling a sick person to imagine she was well. I wish you'd *hu-sh,* Eliza."

"Pride must have a fall sometime," said Harry, impatiently. "You are getting paid now, Cammie, for turning up your nose at poor people."

"Hush, Harry," said Eliza; "I can't bear to see her pretty eyes so red."

"I wish *I* knew what to do for you," said Susan with tears in her eyes. "Mr. Champe says he don't believe it's as bad as the papers say."

"He *believes* in your father with *all his might,*" said Eliza, rising to go. "We will pray for you all. That's the *best* we can do. Good-by."

As they left, while Susan was talking to Cammie, Harry whispered to Eliza so the others couldn't hear: "Don't tell Susan, but I want you to meet me at the honeysuckle-spread to-night after everybody is in bed. It's *very important.* I have something to tell you that may change everything for the better."

"What time?" asked Eliza hastily.

"I'll be there waiting at ten o'clock."

"All right. I'll promise to come," she whispered.

And after Aune Jane had sent them to bed, she suddenly remembered her promise and wondered how on earth she was ever going to be able to keep it.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RESULTS OF ELIZA

IT was half-past ten that night before she could manage it. "I verily believe Aunt Jane has eyes in the back of her head," she said as she reached the honeysuckle-spread and the waiting Harry. "She always before this has been asleep by ten o'clock anyway, but when I tried to slip out then, she heard me and called, 'Eliza,' and then I had to go back and lie there waiting ages for her to go to sleep. As it was, I climbed down that porch column where the big locust tree puts it in darkness, for I didn't want to leave the door unlocked. I'm very tired."

"I appreciate your taking so much trouble for me, I've a wonderful dream to tell you, Eliza."

"Do you mean to say you put me to this trouble for a silly old dream?" Eliza asked disgustedly.

"I thought you wanted to help me," said Harry.

"I do. I didn't come to listen to *dreams.*"

"This one bears on the subject. Don't you believe in dreams, Eliza?"

"Well—yes. I always did believe in them a little bit."

"You see this bag I've got in my hand?" said Harry.

"Well?" Eliza was trying to be patient.

"It holds money, Eliza. A whole hundred dollars that I got when I sold my last pony."

"What are you going to do with it?" she asked, much impressed.

"That's what I'm going to tell you now," he said, seating himself on the honeysuckle-spread and motioning Eliza to do the same.

"You know, Father has been gone two days now. Saturday night was the first time we knew about the bank when we saw the night's paper. Immediately I guessed at the truth. Father has seemed so worried lately, but I never took much notice until this happened; then the thought suddenly occurred to me that maybe he had been speculating or something and lost our money and other people's. I studied about it until I went to sleep. Then I began to dream all sorts of things, but the only dream I remembered was this one: I thought Father came to me and said, 'Son, I have to run in hiding until all this blows over because the people are going to rise up in arms at their losses. I intend to come back and make good, of course, when they will let me, but now I must run. Son, there's one thing that's troubling me; I haven't a bit of *money* to help me off. I didn't think of it.' 'Take mine,'

I cried, running and getting this bag for him. 'Thank you—you've saved me,' he said, and left."

"Well," said Eliza, who had listened breathlessly to Harry's dream. "It *was* funny, but I don't see where *I* come in."

"That's what I'm coming to now," said Harry. "I woke up after I had dreamed that, and the daylight was beginning to creep in at the windows. It was all so real that at first I thought it had sure enough happened. When I found my mistake, I went back to sleep again and I dreamed this: I thought I saw my father hiding in *Rose's Mill Cave*. I ran upon him accidentally and he looked at me so reproachfully and said, 'Son, I trusted you; why didn't you bring the money?' Then I woke up for good, and I have had it on my mind all day."

Eliza was very silent for a minute, until the full significance of Harry's meaning came to her. "You think he's there waiting?" she asked.

"I'm sure of it," replied Harry.

"Then, why haven't you run to him before this? Go at once, Harry, before it is too late."

"Eliza," said Harry, "I know you are going to hate me after what I tell you now, but I couldn't go in the daylight, because if he's hiding, somebody might have followed me and found him and then besides, it never seemed so true then. I can't go now, because *I'm afraid of the dark.*"

"What on earth—" began Eliza incredulously.

"You'll hate me for a shirk and a coward, I know," he said mournfully, "but I could no more go *at night* than I could fly."

"Do you want *me* to go for you?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, hiding his face.

The situation was terrible. Eliza knew exactly where the cave was—a most dreadfully lonesome place, but the discovery that Harry—oh, Eliza couldn't conceive anything as bad as this—a boy willing to let a girl do what he wouldn't! With a mighty effort she tried to hide the contempt from showing in her voice.

"Well—I will go for you, Harry. I—suppose it is a sort of bravery to *acknowledge* one's cowardice."

"You will have to enter that dark cave after night," warned Harry. "You must do it of your own free will, Eliza."

"I'm never afraid of anything *out doors,*" said Eliza. "But to go inside of dark places like a cave after night is not what—I 'specially like."

"I'd go with you only everybody would expect it had something to do with Father if I were found missing."

"No, you'd better stay," said Eliza sweetly, knowing that was not his only excuse. "Harry, if I shouldn't come back by morning you'll know where to look for me."

"If you are not back by daylight, I'll come look you up."

"Give the money to me and let me start."

"Good-by, Eliza—and thank you," his voice broke.

She nodded at him brightly and was soon speeding down the street.

"She is some great girl," said Harry to himself, when, just as he turned to go into the house, Eliza came running back.

"Harry," she called softly, "Harry, wait a minute. I've something important to tell you."

"So you've changed your mind—you are not going?" said he as she drew near.

"Of course I'm going. When you put your hand to the plow, Harry, never turn back. I only wanted to make my will."

"Your *will,* Eliza?" The solemnity of it struck him with full force.

"Everybody ought to make one, Harry—if they don't want other people to do it for them after they are dead."

"Dead!" Harry looked pale.

"Yes, Harry," Eliza's tones were impressive. "What I am going to do is dangerous—you must see it is, Harry. But I—I am not afraid. I'll be thinking all the time how I am doing it for somebody I don't like—and that will be the glory for me."

"Don't you like Dad?"

"He isn't so very lovable, Harry."

"Why?" Harry stiffened perceptibly.

"Because he's like Aunt Jane, exactly. The love isn't in them. The only difference is, Aunt Jane pretends to have it and he doesn't. Love is a lovely thing, Harry. It is God. If you haven't got it for everybody, you are on the losing side."

Harry stared at her with open mouth.

"Harry, take me somewhere and give me a pen and paper. I must hurry, for Aunt Jane is liable to miss me at any minute. I pinned a note on my pillow telling her to call here and find out where I was. I hoped she wouldn't wake until I got back."

Harry opened the front door very quietly and led her upstairs to a little room off from his own where he kept his books and writing material. Eliza sat down by a table and began at once to write. Her pen moved rapidly. She only paused once or twice and that was to think about the spelling—Eliza's spelling was her weak point. When she finished she looked up, saying, "I haven't much to will, after all, Harry. You read it so you can sign as a witness."

This is what Harry read:

"My last will and testament" (in case I die tonight). "I am going to help out a neighbor who is in trouble. I have to go by myself and it is dark as

pich but I am going to do it. It is to take some money to Harry's father. He's hiding in a cave. I will all my things to Susan except my skates and my pearl ring which are my best possessions and I bequeath them to Aunt Jane because I ought to love her and I don't. If Mother wants them, Aunt Jane will give them to her, I suppose. To Mother and Mr. Champe I leave my love which is the best thing after all. And to Mr. Champe I leave all the short stories I ever wrote—the others are burnt. These will be valurble some day. Amen—Eliza."

"Eliza," said Harry solemnly, after laying the will back on the little table, "I can't stand to let you go alone. I am going with you—to live or to perish."

"It is a noble decision," said Eliza. "The money will make it dangerous, you know. Men have killed men to get a hundred dollars."

"Come on," said Harry nervously.

"I am going to say my prayers first. You can do it or not, as you choose," said Eliza, kneeling as she spoke. Harry soon found himself kneeling also. It was an interesting scene. The light from the chandelier struck full on Eliza's curls and white dress—the same she had put on that morning for church. She prayed aloud and Harry said the "Amen" with her when she had finished. "Dear God," prayed Eliza. "Dear God, please listen and

be with us every minute of to-night—especially to-night, dear God, for we are two little children going out into an awful lonesome and dark place and we have to have You close to us more so than usual. Let us be glad we can do it and let us forget ourselves in doing it and then we won't be afraid. It is right to help a man in trouble—and, dear God, if he brought the trouble on himself and is wicked—which I mustn't judge of, dear God—but if he is, let what we are going through for him kind of soften him up. Please, dear God, don't think I am trying to pick motes in his eyes. Forgive him if he has done anything wrong at the bank. I judge not. Ever your faithful little girl—Amen. Eliza,"

As they rose, they were startled by a form standing in the doorway. Harry rubbed his eyes to wipe away a mist that had gathered there during Eliza's prayer and to make sure he was not dreaming what he now saw. Eliza said nothing. For once she was stricken dumb. The form in the doorway was no other than Mr. Welche!

Mr. Welche stepped forward half way into the room. He also could scarcely believe his senses. He had just come in on a very late train and had entered his house to find this secret meeting. Even though he had surprised the children in prayer, he suspected them of being up to some very naughty prank and an unkindly light gleamed from his eyes.



"DEAR GOD — PLEASE LISTEN AND BE WITH US EVERY MINUTE OF TO-NIGHT — ESPECIALLY TO-NIGHT, DEAR GOD."

It was difficult in Mr. Welche to detect good in any one, but in the two flushed faces before him he could read only guilt and deception. He was given no time to speak, however, for a most dreadful commotion was heard out upon the stairs and Aunt Jane rushed into the room! Her hair was in two long plaits, and a wrapper—silk to be sure, but nevertheless a wrapper—on over her night dress. She threw herself at Eliza in a sort of frenzy. "Oh, my precious—my darling child," she cried, "what haven't I suffered the last five minutes because of you!"

Eliza disengaged herself from her aunt's embraces and stood apart. She looked patiently, even indulgently, at her aunt, at first not speaking. It seemed so useless to try to make either her aunt or Mr. Welche understand. At last she said slowly as if to herself, "I would do it all over again—just exactly like I did—I am very sure I would."

Aunt Jane, sinking into the nearest chair, opened her mouth and wept. Aunt Jane was not pretty when she spread her mouth. Mr. Welche looked up at her once from the table where he was busily engaged reading something he had discovered there, then, he continued his reading until he had finished every word of the little will Eliza had made. The Mr. Welche who remained afterward was not the same Mr. Welche. The scales had fallen from his

eyes, so to speak, and he was open to conviction.

"Harry, my boy, I want you to explain this," he said in a voice so different from his usual voice that it made Eliza stare.

"We thought you were in a cave hiding, and I had my hundred dollars and got Eliza to say she would take it to you to-night."

"But, why didn't *you* bring it to me?"

"I was afraid," admitted Harry, hanging his head.

"But, a little girl, Harry—you wouldn't let her go alone?"

"Yes, sir—I—intended to, but when she made her will and prayed so solemn like—I found—I couldn't let her go alone."

"She was willing, though—that is the great thing. Why were you willing, Eliza, to do this for me?"

"I want to love my enemies," said Eliza sweetly. "I haven't but two—you and Aunt Jane—and I want to love you."

"We are not your enemies."

"You are not on my side, anyway," she said, "and if you are not for me you are against me. I'm tired," she added wistfully. "I want Mother."

"One moment, Eliza. Were you not afraid to go to a cave alone at night?"

"I was all the time, and yet I—I couldn't turn back."

The best in us is often brought to light by unselfishness in others. Eliza's willing sacrifice for himself was not unappreciated. A very soft light kindled in Mr. Welche's eyes as he watched Eliza. Aside from what she had done, she looked very beautiful as she stood there answering his questions.

He took her hand and said:

"Eliza, I am going to make you very happy by telling you two things. First, there will be plenty of money to meet the run on the bank expected tomorrow. It was for this that I left town. Next—and the best, Eliza"—his voice sounded sad—"is this: I don't suppose it will be a secret long—your mother was compelled to tell me because—well, anyhow, it's this: she and that rascal Champe are to be married next month."

As the full significance of his words came to Eliza, her face radiated with joy. Tiptoeing, she drew Mr. Welche's neck in the circle of her arms. Harry approached and took his father's hand—shyly at first—but, when he found it grasped firmly, he felt glad. Just as the hall clock below struck the midnight hour, Mr. Welche leaned over and looked into Harry's eyes. A great light seemed to flash from his own face into the upturned face of the boy.

"Harry, my son," he said. "Another day will soon dawn. Let it be for us both a day of better understanding."

THE END

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